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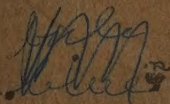
## HAMLET

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY RICHARD GRANT  
WHITE, AND FURNISHED  
WITH ADDITIONAL  
NOTES BY

HELEN GRAY CONE



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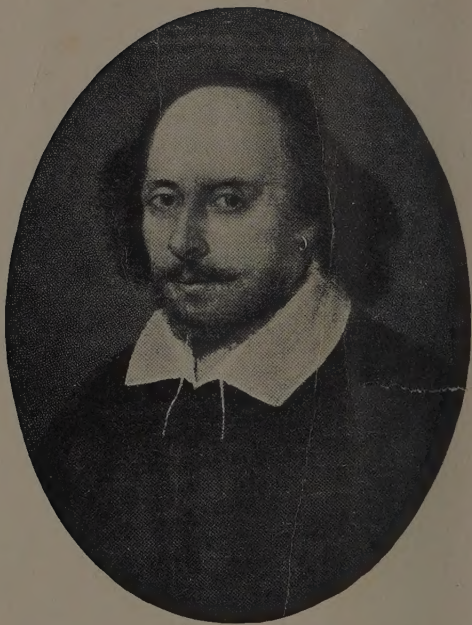
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Alfred E. Newman



William Shakespeare

*From the Chandos Portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, London.*



The Riverside Literature Series

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# HAMLET

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

FROM THE RIVERSIDE EDITION EDITED BY  
RICHARD GRANT WHITE

*WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES*

BY

HELEN GRAY CONE



HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE story of the tragedy which has added more than any other of his works to Shakespeare's fame (although it neither is his greatest play nor contains his greatest poetry), was well known in England long before it was made the subject of dramatic representation. Indeed, it was turned into a play for the very reason that it was "an old story." The chief interest of the audiences for which Shakespeare wrote was in events which they already had in mind. These they liked to have vividly set before their eyes and made impressive by living men seeming the actual personages of legend or of history. They delighted to hear these creatures of flesh and blood utter their joys and their sorrows with that soul-stirring union of homely strength and poetical elevation which came and vanished in the Elizabethan era. But the great point was always the story; and that having popular interest, if it were well known, so much the better. The legend of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, made its first appearance, we have reason to believe, in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus, who wrote about the end of the twelfth century. This was translated into French, and published in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* at Paris in 1570. The French version was translated into English; when, we do not know. The earliest edition known is dated 1608; but we may be sure that it had been printed in English long before that year. From this story that of our tragedy differs in some important details and in its ending; but the variation is due only in part to Shakespeare. We have evidence that before 1587 an English play founded on the story of *Hamlet* was well known in London; and in this play there was important variation from the old legend. For a very striking incident in this old tragedy was the incitement of young Hamlet to revenge by the ghost of his father, of which the tale told by Saxo Grammaticus says nothing. Indeed, in this earlier play the crying out of "Revenge!" by the ghost and by Hamlet was so impressive that that exclamation became associated with Hamlet's name, and was almost a byword. Shakespeare took the old play in hand and entirely rewrote it, modifying the action yet again in his turn; and the result was the famous tragedy now known the world over. His dramatic version of this favorite story was so successful that it was eagerly sought by readers; and to meet this demand an edition of it was published in quarto in 1603. Except in its first scenes, however, this edition is a

monstrous caricature of Shakespeare's tragedy. It was a piratical publication, and the copy was obtained surreptitiously. All the evidence in regard to it goes to show that it was procured through the bad faith of some minor actor in Shakespeare's theatre, partly from notes taken down during the performance; in some passages from actors' copies of their parts; in others from the feeble memory of some person who could not understand what Shakespeare wrote, and who yet undertook to supply from his own poor brain what he could not recollect; and, when all these sources failed, from the old play, many lines of which were made to do duty for corresponding passages in Shakespeare's drama. These scraps were huddled together in confusion and printed in haste, to meet the public demand for the new *Hamlet*. The result was such a ridiculous and mutilated misrepresentation of the real thing that (apparently in self-defence) an authentic copy of the tragedy was furnished to the "stationer" (as booksellers were then called), and in 1604 another edition in quarto was published, which justly professed on its title-page to be "enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect coppie."<sup>1</sup> There were other quarto editions before its appearance in the folio of 1623. Internal evidence shows that the editions of 1603, 1604, and 1623 (the only ones of any importance or authority) all represent one and the same drama. The most valuable text is that of 1604; but even the mutilated, distorted, and interpolated edition of 1603 furnishes important aid to the completion of the tragedy as it came from Shakespeare's pen, which after all, it is to be feared, is not quite attainable. The text of the folio shows evidences of incorrect transcription and also of sophistication. It probably represents the acting copy, and hence omits some very important passages not necessary to stage effect. Of these there are, in a few instances, vestiges in the mutilated edition of 1603 which do not appear in that of 1604. *Hamlet* was probably written about the year 1600. The period of its action is historically very uncertain; but in Shakespeare's imagination it seems to have been somewhere about the tenth century. The duration of the action is as uncertain and indefinite as its period. [See *Suggestions for Special Study*.]

<sup>1</sup> These two important and interesting title-pages are reproduced on the next page, with the typographical arrangement of the originals.



THE  
Tragickall Historie of  
HAMLET  
*Prince of Denmarke*

By William Shakeſpeare.

As it hath beene diuerſe times acted by his Highneſſe ſer-  
uants in the Cittie of London: as alſo in the two V-  
niuerſities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elſe-where.

*Stationer's*

*Device.*

At London printed for N : L. and Iohn Trundell.  
1603.

---

THE  
Tragickall Historie of  
HAMLET,  
*Prince of Denmarke.*

By William Shakeſpeare.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almoſt as much againe  
as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.

*Stationer's*

*Device.*

AT LONDON

Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be ſold at his  
ſhoppe vnder Saint Dunſtons Church in  
Fleetſtreet. 1604.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLAUDIUS, *King of Denmark.*  
 HAMLET, *son to the late and nephew to*  
     *the present King.*  
 POLONIUS, *Lord Chamberlain.*  
 HORATIO, *friend to Hamlet.*  
 LAERTES, *son to Polonius.*  
 VOLTIMAND, }  
 CORNELIUS, } *courtiers.*  
 ROSENCRANTZ, }  
 GUILDENSTERN, }  
 OSRIC, }  
 A Gentleman, }  
 A Priest. }  
 MARCELLUS, } *officers.*  
 BERNARDO, }  
 FRANCISCO, *a soldier.*

REYNALDO, *servant to Polonius.*  
*Players.*  
*Two Clowns, Grave-diggers.*  
 FORTINBRAS, *Prince of Norway.*  
*A Captain.*  
*English Ambassadors.*

GERTRUDE, *Queen of Denmark, and*  
     *mother to Hamlet.*  
 OPHELIA, *daughter to Polonius.*

*Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sail-*  
     *ors, Messengers, and other Attendants.*

*Ghost of Hamlet's Father.*

SCENE : *Elsinore, Denmark.*

# HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK.

---

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *Elsinore. A platform before the castle.*

FRANCISCO at his post. *Enter to him* BERNARDO.

*Ber.* Who 's there?

*Fran.* Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

*Ber.* Long live the king!

*Fran.* Bernardo?

*Ber.* He.

*Fran.* You come most carefully upon your hour.

*Ber.* 'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed,  
Francisco.

*Fran.* For this relief much thanks: 't is bitter  
cold,

And I am sick at heart.

*Ber.* Have you had quiet guard?

*Fran.* Not a mouse stirring. 10

*Ber.* Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,

The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

3. [Long live the king! Pye believes that "this sentence corresponds to the former usage in France, where, to the common challenge *Qui vive?* the answer was *Vive le Roi*, like the modern answer 'A friend.'" The latter is given, in effect, in l. 15.]

13. rivals = partners, having the same occupation and purpose. ["Partners" is the word used in the quarto of 1603.]

*Fran.* I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who's there?

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

*Hor.* Friends to this ground.

*Mar.* And liegemen to the Dane.

*Fran.* Give you good night.

*Mar.* Oh, farewell, honest soldier:  
Who hath relieved you?

*Fran.* Bernardo has my place.  
Give you good night. [Exit.

*Mar.* Holla! Bernardo!

*Ber.* Say,  
What, is Horatio there?

*Hor.* A piece of him.

*Ber.* Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus. 20

*Mar.* What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

*Ber.* I have seen nothing.

*Mar.* Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:  
Therefore I have entreated him along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night;  
That if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

*Hor.* Tush, tush, 't will not appear.

*Ber.* Sit down awhile; 30  
And let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story  
What we have two nights seen.

15. the Dane : emphatical; the chief Dane, the King.

29. approve = confirm, prove that our eyes are right.

32, 33. [The construction here may be either "Let us assail your ears," i. e., tell you, "what we have two nights seen," line

*Hor.* Well, sit we down,  
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

*Ber.* Last night of all,  
When yond same star that 's westward from the pole  
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one, —

*Enter Ghost.*

*Mar.* Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes  
again! 40

*Ber.* In the same figure, like the King that 's dead.

*Mar.* Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

*Ber.* Looks it not like the King? mark it, Horatio.

*Hor.* Most like: it harrows me with fear and  
wonder.

*Ber.* It would be spoke to.

*Mar.* Question it, Horatio.

*Hor.* What art thou that usurp'st this time of  
night,

Together with that fair and warlike form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark

32 being parenthetical, or "Let us assail your ears, — which are so fortified against our story what we have seen for two nights," line 33 to this point being merely explanatory of story. Which construction does the present punctuation favor? The first folio has a comma after story.]

42. a scholar: and could speak Latin, the only language that ghosts were supposed to understand, because it was in that language that priests exorcised them. [Horatio, however, addresses the Ghost in his own tongue, as he would have addressed the living King; apparently forgetting, in his "fear and wonder," the current notion just explained.]

45. [would be = should be, ought to be. See Act III., sc. iii., l. 75; also *Macbeth*, Act III., sc. i., l. 51.]

48. [Denmark = the King of Denmark, as in sc. ii., l. 69. See *Norway*, sc. ii., lines 28 and 35.]



Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee,  
speak!

*Mar.* It is offended.

*Ber.* See, it stalks away! 50

*Hor.* Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

[*Exit Ghost*

*Mar.* 'T is gone, and will not answer.

*Ber.* How now, Horatio! you tremble and look  
pale:

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on 't?

*Hor.* Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.

*Mar.* Is it not like the King?

*Hor.* As thou art to thyself:  
Such was the very armour he had on 60  
When he th' ambitious Norway combated;  
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'T is strange.

*Mar.* Thus twice before, and jump at this dead  
hour,

49. **sometimes** = in time past.

57. [**avouch** = attestation; an instance of that use of the verb as a noun in which the Elizabethans frequently indulged. Keats followed their example; in *Endymion*, Book I., we find "in blind amaze," and "with glad exclaim." — Find another instance of this usage, in the present scene.]

62. **parle**: loosely used as debate, in the sense of quarrel.

63. **Polacks** = Poles. [The picturesque epithet **sled** has given disproportionate trouble to some commentators. It seems merely to mean that the Poles commonly used sleds, and to be an incidental touch like Othello's "turban'd Turk."]

65. [**jump** = just, — which is used in the folios. See, also, Act V., sc. ii., l. 380.]

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

*Hor.* In what particular thought to work I know not;

But in the gross and scope of mine opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

*Mar.* Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,

70

Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war;  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;  
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:  
Who is 't that can inform me?

*Hor.* That can I;

At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,  
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,  
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet —  
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him —  
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,

80

70. [Good now: explained by Dr. Johnson as “a gentle exclamation of entreaty.” See *Comedy of Errors*, Act IV., sc. iv., l. 22.]

72. [the subject: a collective noun, as in *Measure for Measure*, Act III., sc. ii., l. 145, and *King Lear*, Act IV., sc. vi., l. 107.]

77. toward = coming, in movement to-ward.

82. Fortinbras = *fort en bras*. Strong-i'-th'-arm now exists as a surname in the North of England.

83. [emulate = loosely used for emulous.]

Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
 Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror :  
 Against the which, a moiety competent 90  
 Was gaged by our king ; which had return'd  
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
 Had he been vanquisher ; as, by the same cov'nant,  
 And carriage of the article's design,  
 His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
 Of unimproved mettle hot and full,  
 Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
 Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,  
 For food and diet, to some enterprise  
 That hath a stomach in 't ; which is no other — 100  
 As it doth well appear unto our state —  
 But to recover of us, by strong hand  
 And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands  
 So by his father lost : and this, I take it,  
 Is the main motive of our preparations,

89. [seized of = possessed of.]

93. [cov'nant: the reading of the folios, which Mr. White prefers on the ground that co-mart, the singular word given in the quartos, "implies a trading purpose not well suited to a royal combat for a province." With co-mart, the line may be read satisfactorily as a hexameter; with cov'nant it is a pentameter hypercatalectic, one syllable being slurred, — perhaps the last of vanquisher, in which case as is strongly marked by the voice; perhaps the article, in which case by receives the stress.]

94. [carriage = carrying out.]

98. [Shark'd up = picked up as the shark takes his prey, eagerly and without distinction.]

100. [stomach: Caldecott observes that the word is "here put in an equivocal sense, importing both courage and appetite." See *Julius Cæsar*, Act V., sc. i., l. 65. In the present instance the full meaning would be: "that which invites courage, and promises satisfaction to appetite."]

The source of this our watch and the chief head  
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.

*Ber.* I think it be no other but e'en so:  
Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
Comes armed through our watch; so like the King 110  
That was and is the question of these wars.

*Hor.* A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
In the most high and palmy state of Rome;  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:

. . . . .  
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse: 120  
And even the like precurse of fierce events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen coming on,  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climature and countrymen. —  
But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!

107. [*romage* = turmoil.]

[Lines 108–125 are omitted in the folios.]

. . . Here a line or more has been lost. [The meaning doubtless was, that prodigies appeared in the sky; Hunter suggests, "In the heavens above strange portents did appear."]

118. *moist star* = the moon.

121. [*precurse* = foreshadowing.]

123. *omen*: loosely used for that which the omen is supposed to foreshadow.

125. *climature* = clime: the form for rhythm's sake; the thought suggested by the foregoing allusions to the powers of nature.

*Re-enter Ghost.*

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done,

130

That may to thee do ease and grace to me,

Speak to me:

[*Cock crows.*]

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,

(Which happily foreknowing may avoid,)

Oh, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

*Mar.* Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

140

*Hor.* Do, if it will not stand.

*Ber.*

'Tis here!

*Hor.*

'Tis here!

*Mar.* 'Tis gone!

[*Exit Ghost.*]

We do it wrong, being so majestical,

To offer it the show of violence;

For it is, as the air, invulnerable,

And our vain blows malicious mockery.

*Ber.* It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

*Hor.* And then it started like a guilty thing

Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,

The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,

150

Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat

Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,

Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,

127. *cross it.* To cross the path of a ghost or a fiend was to defy it.

150. [*trumpet* = trumpeter.]



The extravagant and erring spirit hies  
To his confine : and of the truth herein  
This present object made probation.

*Mar.* It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long : 160  
And then, they say, no spirit dares walk abroad ;  
The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

*Hor.* So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill :  
Break we our watch up ; and by my advice,  
Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
Unto young Hamlet ; for, upon my life, 170  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty ?

*Mar.* Let's do 't, I pray ; and I this morning know  
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A room of state in the castle.*

*Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND,  
CORNELIUS, Lords, and Attendants.*

*King.* Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's  
death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted

154. [extravagant = wandering out of bounds. erring has the same force.]

163. takes = bewitches, exerts injurious power.

170. young Hamlet = Hamlet the younger, irrespective of age.

To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
 Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
 The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
 Have we, as 't were with a defeated joy, — 10  
 With one auspicious and one dropping eye,  
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole, —  
 Taken to wife : nor have we herein barr'd  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
 Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,  
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame, 20  
 Colleagu'd with the dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him.  
 Now for ourself and for this time of meeting :  
 Thus much the business is : we have here writ  
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, —

9. *jointress* = woman who had a jointure in.

10. [a *defeated joy* : to defeat is to mar or disfigure ; see *Othello*, Act I., sc. iii., l. 346. (Clarendon Press editors, quoted by Dr. Furness.)]

11. *dropping eye*. I believe that Shakespeare intended "drooping eye," for which the old text seems to me a mere irregular spelling and a much inferior reading.

22. *pester* = worry by numbers, iteration ; here, importune.

Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears  
 Of this his nephew's purpose, — to suppress 30  
 His further gait herein ; in that the levies,  
 The lists and full proportions, are all made  
 Out of his subjects : and we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,  
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway ;  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To business with the King, more than the scope  
 Of these delated articles allow. [Giving a paper.  
 Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

*Cor.* } In that and all things will we show our  
*Vol.* } duty. 40

*King.* We doubt it nothing : heartily farewell.

[Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.

And now, Laertes, what 's the news with you ?  
 You told us of some suit ; what is 't, Laertes ?  
 You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,  
 And lose your voice : what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
 That shall not be my offer, not thy asking ?  
 The head is not more native to the heart,  
 The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
 Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.  
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes ?

*Laer.* My dread lord, 50

Your leave and favour to return to France ;  
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,  
 To show my duty in your coronation,

31. gait = going.

38. delated = filled out.

44. the Dane = the Dane, the King.

53. [your coronation. The quarto of 1603 makes Laertes ask for leave to return to France, "Now that the funeral rites are all performed." What idea of Laertes would be conveyed to us by such a speech ? What idea of him is created by his speech in the correct version ?]

Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

*King.* Have you your father's leave? What says  
Polonius?

*Pol.* He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow  
leave

By laboursome petition, and at last  
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:  
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

60

*King.* Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son, —

*Ham.* [*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less  
than kind.

*King.* How is it that the clouds still hang on  
you?

*Ham.* Not so, my lord; I am too much i' th' sun.

65. **A little more than kin.** Hamlet acknowledges that there was more than kindred between them, as his uncle was also his father-in-law, but he eagerly denies that he is Claudius's son, of his kind. A little of precision in the thought is sacrificed to the jingle of the words. [This passage, with its many possible meanings, is our fittest introduction to the many-sided and baffling Hamlet. It seems likely that **kind** here means "nature," as it generally does in Shakespeare; which gives us the sardonic undersaying, "A little more than ordinary relationship, — and less, alas, than nature!" and emphasizes Hamlet's disgust at his mother's marriage. See l. 157.]

67. **i' th' sun** = leading an easy, aimless life, like one who suns himself; and with an allusion to the old proverb, "Out of God's blessing into the warm sun." [This proverb appears to have been equivalent to "From good to bad." It may not have been in Hamlet's mind; what seems clear is that Claudius refers both to Hamlet's costume and to his manner; and that Hamlet replies to the metaphor, "On the contrary, I am too

*Queen.* Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,  
 And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
 Do not for ever with thy veiled lids 70  
 Seek for thy noble father in the dust :  
 Thou know'st 't is common ; all that lives must die,  
 Passing through nature to eternity.

*Ham.* Ay, madam, it is common.

*Queen.* If it be,  
 Why seems it so particular with thee ?

*Ham.* Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not  
 seems.

'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
 Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye, 80  
 Nor the dejected 'haviour of the visage,  
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
 That can denote me truly : these indeed seem ;  
 For they are actions that a man might play :  
 But I have that within which passeth show ;  
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

*King.* 'T is sweet and commendable in your nature,  
 Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father :  
 But, you must know, your father lost a father ;

much in the sun (of the court festivity)." For a further possible meaning, see *Suggestions for Special Study.*]

70. [*veiled*=downcast. See *Merchant of Venice*, Act I., sc. i., l. 28.]

82. [Knight notes that "the *forms* are the ceremonies of grief, the *moods* its prevailing sullenness." Capell, followed by Dr. Furness, reads "modes." Instead of *shapes* the folios have "shows."]

87. [*commendable* : accent on the first syllable ; the last running easily into "in."]



That father lost, lost his ; and the survivor bound 90  
 In filial obligation for some term  
 To do obsequious sorrow : but to persever  
 In obstinate condolment is a course  
 Of impious stubbornness; 't is unmanly grief ;  
 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
 An understanding simple and unschool'd :  
 For what we know must be and is as common  
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,  
 Why should we in our peevish opposition 100  
 Take it to heart? Fie! 't is a fault to heaven,  
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
 To reason most absurd ; whose common theme  
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,  
 From the first corse till he that died to-day,  
 "This must be so." We pray you, throw to earth  
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us  
 As of a father : for let the world take note,  
 You are the most immediate to our throne ;  
 And with no less nobility of love 110  
 Than that which dearest father bears his son,  
 Do I impart toward you. For your intent  
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,

92. *obsequious*=suited to obsequies. [See Sonnet XXXI.]  
*persever*. Shakespeare always accents this word on the second syllable.

107. [*unprevailing*=unavailing. Malone quotes Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*: "He may often prevail himself of the same advantages in English." The Clarendon Press editors call attention to *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III., sc. iii., l. 60.]

112. [*impart*: frequently intransitive ; see Act III., sc. ii., l. 295.]

113. *Wittenberg*. This university was not established until A. D. 1502. Luther made it famous. Shakespeare used its

It is most retrograde to our desire :  
 And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
 Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

*Queen.* Let not thy mother lose her prayers,  
 Hamlet :

I pray thee, stay with us ; go not to Wittenberg.

*Ham.* I shall in all my best obey you, madam. 120

*King.* Why, 't is a loving and a fair reply :

Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come ;  
 This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
 Sits smiling to my heart : in grace whereof,  
 No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,  
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
 And the King's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,  
 Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

*Ham.* Oh, that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew ! 130  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! O God ! God !  
 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world !  
 Fie on 't ! ah fie ! 't is an unweeded garden,  
 That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in na-  
 ture

name merely as that of a northern school, to which a Dane of  
*his* day might go.

117. *cousin*=kinsman, in a very wide sense.

127. *rouse*=deep potation: of Danish origin.

132. *His canon.* There is no such canon. [In this line the  
 folios read "O God ! O God !" Professor Corson says in regard  
 to the quarto reading, "every reader would feel the want of the  
 second 'O,' on which to dwell before uttering 'God' with a  
 strong aspiration."]

Possess it merely. That it should come to this !  
 But two months dead : nay, not so much, not two :  
 So excellent a king ; that was, to this,  
 Hyperion to a satyr ; so loving to my mother 140  
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven  
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !  
 Must I remember ? why, she would hang on him,  
 As if increase of appetite had grown  
 By what it fed on : and yet, within a month —  
 Let me not think on 't — Frailty, thy name is wo-  
 man ! —

A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
 With which she followed my poor father's body,  
 Like Niobe, all tears : — why she, even she —  
 O God ! a beast, that wants discourse of reason, 150  
 Would have mourn'd longer — married with my  
 uncle,

My father's brother, but no more like my father  
 Than I to Hercules ; within a month :  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
 She married. Oh, most wicked speed, to post  
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets !  
 It is not nor it cannot come to good :  
 But break, my heart ; for I must hold my tongue.

141. **beteem** = permit.

150. **discourse of reason** = action of the mind, capacity of thought. The phrase was not uncommon in Shakespeare's day.

155. **flushing** = redness. **galled** = irritated.

157. **dexterity**: possibly a misprint for "celerity," but more probably a loose use of the word.

159. [**But break, my heart.** In the old copies there is no comma after **break**. Professor Corson, quoted by Dr. Furness, says: "'Break' is a subjunctive, not an imperative, and 'heart' is a subject, not a vocative."]

*Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO.*

*Hor.* Hail to your lordship!

*Ham.* I am glad to see you: 160

Horatio, — or I do forget myself.

*Hor.* The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

*Ham.* Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?  
Marcellus?

*Mar.* My good lord —

*Ham.* I am very glad to see you. [*To Ber.*] Good even, sir. —

But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

*Hor.* A truant disposition, good my lord.

*Ham.* I would not hear your enemy say so, 170  
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,  
To make it truster of your own report  
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.  
But what is your affair in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

*Hor.* My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

*Ham.* I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;  
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

*Hor.* Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.

*Ham.* Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked  
meats 180

160. [I am glad to see you: Mr. White here follows Collier in omitting "well," which is given at the end of the line, both in the quartos and in the folios. If we read "well," "I am" must be contracted, so that the number of accents in the line is not excessive.]

164. [what make you? = what are you doing? It is repeated in Act II., sc. ii., l. 268. See, also, *As You Like It*, Act I., sc. i., l. 28 (Riverside Literature Series). from is emphatic.]

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.  
 Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven  
 Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!  
 My father! — methinks I see my father.

*Hor.* Where, my lord?

*Ham.* In my mind's eye, Horatio.

*Hor.* I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

*Ham.* He was a man, take him for all in all,  
 I shall not look upon his like again.

*Hor.* My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

*Ham.* Saw who?

190

*Hor.* My lord, the King your father.

*Ham.* The King my father!

*Hor.* Season your admiration for a while  
 With an attent ear, till I may deliver,  
 Upon the witness of these gentlemen,  
 This marvel to you.

*Ham.* For God's love, let me hear.

*Hor.* Two nights together had these gentlemen,

182. [**dearest foe**: "Dear is used of whatever touches us nearly either in love or hate, joy or sorrow." Clarendon Press editors. — A feeling for language is necessary, rather than an extended knowledge of derivations, to enable the reader to taste the keen flavor of this expression, which incidentally shows Hamlet to be what Dr. Johnson called "a good hater."]

183. [**Or**=before.]

185. [**Where**: the quarto reading. The folio has "Oh where, my lord?" Which seems better adapted to Horatio's probable feeling at that moment?]

187. [**He was a man**: this is sometimes read as if the ideas "king" and "man" were placed in opposition. It is surely more natural that Hamlet should utter the words simply, without thought of their effect upon Horatio, and turning, as it were, the "mind's eye" inward. The restraint of the expression is as remarkable as the depth of its meaning.]

192. [**Season**=temper. **admiration**=wonder.]



Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,  
 In the dead vast and middle of the night,  
 Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,  
 Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pie, 200  
 Appears before them, and with solemn march  
 Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd  
 By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,  
 Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd  
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear,  
 Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me  
 In dreadful secrecy impart they did;  
 And I with them the third night kept the watch:  
 Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,  
 Form of the thing, each word made true and good, 210  
 The apparition comes: I knew your father;  
 These hands are not more like.

*Ham.* But where was this?

*Mar.* My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

*Ham.* Did you not speak to it?

198. **vast**: so the first quarto; possibly we should read *waste* (which has the same meaning), with the quarto of 1604.

200. **Armed at point**=perfectly, fully, armed. **cap-a-pie**=head to foot. Old French adopted into English.

204. [**distill'd**: the folios have different spellings of "be-still'd," which appears to be a strong form of "still'd."]

205. [**act**=operation.]

207. [**dreadful**: one of the adjectives which have both an active and a passive meaning: here, "full of dread;" elsewhere, "causing dread."]

214. [**Did you not speak to it?** The proper emphasis in this line depends upon our answer to the question: Which is at this moment the dominant thought in Hamlet's mind, his dear friend's obligation to inquire into a matter which may concern *him*; or the imperative necessity of some one's speaking to the 'ghost'? In the first case, the emphatic word is **you**, in the second, **speak**.]

*Hor.* My lord, I did ;  
 But answer made it none : yet once methought  
 It lifted up it head and did address  
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak ;  
 But even then the morning cock crew loud,  
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,  
 And vanish'd from our sight.

*Ham.* 'T is very strange. 220

*Hor.* As I do live, my honour'd lord, 't is true ;  
 And we did think it writ down in our duty  
 To let you know of it.

*Ham.* Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.  
 Hold you the watch to-night ?

*Mar.* { We do, my lord.  
*Ber.* {

*Ham.* Arm'd, say you ?

*Mar.* { Arm'd, my lord.  
*Ber.* {

*Ham.* From top to toe ?

*Mar.* { My lord, from head to foot.  
*Ber.* {

*Ham.* Then saw you not his face ?

*Hor.* Oh, yes, my lord ; he wore his beaver up. 230

*Ham.* What, look'd he frowningly ?

*Hor.* A countenance more

In sorrow than in anger.

*Ham.* Pale, or red ? .

*Hor.* Nay, very pale.

*Ham.* And fix'd his eyes upon you ?

*Hor.* Most constantly.

216. *it head*: "it" with possessive sense, as elsewhere. The possessive form "its" was slowly coming into use in Shakespeare's day. [For "its" see *Winter's Tale*, Act I., sc. ii., lines 151-158; for "it," the same play, Act II., sc. iii., l. 178.]

*Ham.* I would I had been there.

*Hor.* It would have much amazed you.

*Ham.* Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

*Hor.* While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

*Mar.* {  
*Ber.* { Longer, longer.

*Hor.* Not when I saw 't.

*Ham.* His beard was grizzly, — no?

*Hor.* It was, as I have seen it in his life, 240  
*A.* sable silver'd.

*Ham.* I will watch to-night;  
Perchance 't will walk again.

*Hor.* I warrant it will.

*Ham.* If it assume my noble father's person,  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape  
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,  
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,  
Let it be tenable in your silence still;  
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,  
Give it an understanding, but no tongue:  
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well: 250  
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,  
I'll visit you.

*All.* Our duty to your honour.

*Ham.* Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

239. [grizzly: the quartos give an old spelling of "grizzled," perhaps the preferable word.]

241. a sable silver'd. This is mere assent with specification.

247. [tenable=holdable, here put for "held;" some editors adopt the folio reading, "treble," explaining it either as enjoining silence on Hamlet's three companions, or as impressing a three-fold necessity for silence.]

253. [The first quarto has here the best reading, "Your loves,

My father's spirit in arms ! all is not well ;  
 I doubt some foul play : would the night were  
 come !

Till then sit still, my soul : foul deeds will rise,  
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III. *A room in POLONIUS' house.*

*Enter LAERTES and OPHELIA.*

*Laer.* My necessities are embark'd : farewell :  
 And, sister, as the winds give benefit  
 And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,  
 But let me hear from you.

*Oph.* Do you doubt that ?

*Laer.* For Hamlet and the trifling of his fa-  
 vour,

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,  
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute ;  
 No more.

your loves ;" the repetition creates an impression of eager  
 craving, and we escape, at the same time, an imperfect line.]

3. [*convoy*=conveyance.]

6. [*a fashion*=a changeable thing; see, also, l. 112. *toy*  
*in blood*=trifle, originating in caprice. In Shakespeare *blood*  
 frequently signifies "passionate impulse," and is placed in oppo-  
 sition to *judgement*; see Act III., sc. ii, l. 70. A deep signifi-  
 cance is given to the balance of these two ideas, by Professor  
 Dowden, in his very interesting remarks on *Hamlet* and *Romeo*  
 and *Juliet*. (Shakspeare, His Mind and Art.)]

7. [*primy nature*=nature in its prime, wearing the first  
 freshness of spring.]

9. *suppliance*=that which fills up.

*Oph.* No more but so ?

*Laer.* Think it no more : 10

For nature, crescent, does not grow alone  
In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,  
The inward service of the mind and soul  
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,  
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch  
The virtue of his will : but you must fear,  
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own ;  
For he himself is subject to his birth :  
He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
Carve for himself ; for on his choice depends 20  
The safety and health of this whole state ;  
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed  
Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves  
you,

It fits your wisdom so far to believe it  
As he in his peculiar sect and place  
May give his saying deed ; which is no further  
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.  
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,  
If with too credent ear you list his songs, 30  
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open  
To his unmaster'd importunity.  
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,  
And keep you in the rear of your affection,  
Out of the shot and danger of desire.

15. *cautel*=crafty purpose.

21. *The safety*. Here *safety* is a trisyllable. [But as it is a dissyllable in l. 43, possibly "the" has dropped out before *health*.]

26. *peculiar sect*=rank in life ; so used by Shakespeare elsewhere ; the quarto has "particular act."

The chariest maid is prodigal enough,  
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon :  
 Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes :  
 The canker galls the infants of the spring,  
 Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,  
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
 Be wary then ; best safety lies in fear :  
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

40

*Oph.* I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,  
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,  
 Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven ;  
 Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,  
 And recks not his own rede.

50

*Laer.* Oh, fear me not.  
 I stay too long : but here my father comes.

*Enter* POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace ;  
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

*Pol.* Yet here, Laertes ! aboard, aboard, for shame !  
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
 And you are stay'd for. There ; my blessing with  
 thee !

And these few precepts in thy memory

39. [the infants of the spring : the same expression is used in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I., sc. i., l. 101. So Keats, in *Endymion*, calls the early flowers "April's tender younglings ;" and in the *Ode to a Nightingale*, "the coming muskrose" is "mid-May's eldest child."]

40. buttons = buds.

50. Himself, etc. : a confusion of persons and a consequent break in construction. Not corrupt, and plain enough.

51. rede = advice, counsel.

See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
 Nor any unproportion'd thought his act. 60  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;  
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
 Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware  
 Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  
 Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judge-  
 ment.  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, 70  
 But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
 And they in France of the best rank and station

59. **character**=write down. [Accent on second syllable, as in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II., sc. vii., l. 4.]

60. [**unproportion'd**=unshaped, crude.]

61. **vulgar**=common; in the way set forth in the next four lines. [See the reproof of the King to his son, *Henry IV.*, Pt. I., Act III., sc. ii., especially lines 39-47.]

63. [**hooks**: this is Pope's suggestion. The folios and quartos have "hoops."]

64. ["Do not make thy palm callous by shaking every man by the hand."—Dr. Johnson. But perhaps *dull thy palm* is, like "stale thy palm," *Troilus and Cressida*, Act II., sc. iii. l. 201, an entirely different metaphor: "Do not impair the freshness of the palm that you have won," i. e., do not injure your reputation.]

65. [**comrade**: accent on the second syllable, as in *Henry IV.*, Pt. I., Act IV., sc. i., l. 96. The quartos have *courage* (no doubt accented in like manner), which may be, as Ingleby holds, Euphuistic for "a gallant."]

69. [**censure**=judgement, not necessarily adverse; see the verb in *Julius Cæsar*, Act III., sc. ii., l. 16.]



Are most select and generous in that.  
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be ;  
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
 This above all : to thine own self be true,  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man. 80  
 Farewell : my blessing season this in thee !

*Laer.* Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

*Pol.* The time invites you ; go ; your servants  
 tend.

*Laer.* Farewell, Ophelia ; and remember well  
 What I have said to you.

*Oph.* 'Tis in my memory lock'd,  
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

*Laer.* Farewell. [Exit.]

*Pol.* What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you ?

*Oph.* So please you, something touching the Lord  
 Hamlet.

*Pol.* Marry, well bethought : 90  
 'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late  
 Given private time to you ; and you yourself  
 Have of your audience been most free and bounteous :

74. [Mr. White's reading of this line neatly cuts the knot of a great difficulty. The folios have "Are of a most select and generous cheff in that ;" many editors read "chief," and some simplify the passage by dropping "of a" and placing a comma after "generous ;" but perhaps the most plausible conjecture is Staunton's : "Are of a most select and generous sheaf in that," "sheaf" being a Euphuism for "class" or "set." Ben Jonson speaks of "Noblemen and gentlemen of the best sheaf."]

77. [husbandry = thrift. See *Macbeth*, Act II., sc. i., l. 4.]

80. **Thou canst not then be false.** This maxim, and all of those which Polonius impresses on Laertes, Shakespeare found in John Lyly's *Euphues*.

If it be so, as so 'tis put on me,  
 And that in way of caution, I must tell you,  
 You do not understand yourself so clearly  
 As it behoves my daughter and your honour.  
 What is between you? give me up the truth.

*Oph.* He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders  
 Of his affection to me. 100

*Pol.* Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,  
 Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

*Oph.* I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

*Pol.* Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby;  
 That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,  
 Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more  
 dearly;

Or — not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,  
 Running it thus — you'll tender me a fool.

*Oph.* My lord, he hath importuned me with love 110  
 In honourable fashion.

94. [put on me = represented to me, or urged upon me.]

99. [tenders: this "poor phrase" is chased by Polonius through various significations. In lines 99 and 103 it is a noun equivalent to "offers;" in l. 106 it still means "offers," though with the special sense of substitutes offered instead of money; in l. 107 the verb **Tender** means "cherish, regard;" in l. 109 it means "offer" or "render."]

102. **Unsifted**: very loosely used for "inexperienced," unless we should read "unsuited."

109. [Running: a conjecture of Collier. The quartos read "Wrong," which suggested "Wronging" to Pope and others; the folios have "Roaming." **Running** connects itself most naturally with the metaphor in l. 108; Keightley quotes, in illustration, *Comedy of Errors*, Act IV., sc. i., l. 57. For a similar "kind of chase" see *As You Like It*, Act I., sc. iii., lines (29-32.)]

110. **importuned**: accented on the second syllable.

*Pol.* Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.

*Oph.* And hath given countenance to his speech,  
my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

*Pol.* Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,  
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,  
You must not take for fire. From this time 120  
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;  
Set your entreatments at a higher rate  
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,  
Believe so much in him, that he is young,

112. [*fashion*: see l. 6. For *go to*, see note on Act V., sc. i., l. 41.]

117. [*these blazes, daughter*: this line lacks a syllable, or perhaps two. Mr. White believed that some epithet to *blazes* had been omitted. Nicholson suggested "these bavin blazes, daughter,"—an excellent Shakespearian epithet; see *King Henry IV.*, Pt. I., Act III., sc. ii., lines 61, 62. Coleridge thought that a spondee had dropped out of the text, and he advised the insertion of "go to" after *vows*, or of "mark you" after *daughter*. He remarks, perhaps too generally: "Shakespeare never introduces a catalectic line without intending an equivalent to the foot omitted, in the pauses, or the dwelling emphasis, or the diffused retardation." This last expedient, he admits, might be employed here, the line being spoken with a "solemn knowing drawl." *Vows* is given with ironical emphasis, and perhaps a contemptuous laugh, either before or after it, might, as Moberly thinks, occupy the time of two additional syllables.]

122. [*entreatments*: this word was used with the sense of conversation, or entertainment. If it be understood as meaning "entreaties," it has here the same force,—being a metonymy for "things entreated" by Hamlet, *i. e.*, "your company and conversation."]

And with a larger tether may he walk  
 Than may be given you : in few, Ophelia,  
 Do not believe his vows ; for they are brokers,  
 Not of that dye which their investments show,  
 But mere implorators of unholy suits,  
 Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,  
 The better to beguile. This is for all :  
 I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,  
 Have you so slander any moment's leisure,  
 As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.  
 Look to 't, I charge you : come your ways.

130

*Oph.* I shall obey, my lord.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *The platform.*

*Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS.*

*Ham.* The air bites shrewdly ; it is very cold.

*Hor.* It is a nipping and an eager air.

*Ham.* What hour now ?

*Hor.* I think it lacks of twelve.

*Mar.* No, it is struck.

*Hor.* Indeed ? I heard it not : then it draws near  
 the season

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within.*]

What does this mean, my lord ?

*Ham.* The King doth wake to-night and takes his  
 rouse,

Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels ;

128. [investments = garments.]

130. [bonds : this is the reading both of the folios and of the quartos, and does not seem to call for emendation. Corson remarks, "*Bonds*, involving the idea of *vows*, should not receive the stress, in reading, which should be given to *pious*."] ]

9. up-spring = the English name of a riotous German

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, 10  
 The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out  
 The triumph of his pledge.

*Hor.* Is it a custom?

*Ham.* Ay, marry, is 't:  
 But to my mind, though I am native here  
 And to the manner born, it is a custom  
 More honour'd in the breach than the observance.  
 This heavy-headed revel east and west  
 Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:  
 They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase 20  
 Soil our addition; and indeed it takes  
 From our achievements, though perform'd at height,  
 The pith and marrow of our attribute.  
 So, oft it chances in particular men,  
 That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
 As, in their birth — wherein they are not guilty,  
 Since nature cannot choose his origin —  
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion  
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
 Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens  
 The form of plausible manners, that these men, 30

dance. [Staunton understands *reels* as a plural noun, qualified by *up-spring*; Dr. Furness supposes it to be a verb in the same construction as *keeps*.]

17. *east and west*: as if, far and wide.

18. *tax'd*=found fault with, adversely criticised.

19. *clepe*=name, call.

20. *addition*=title, style.

24. [*mole of nature*=natural blemish.]

27. [*complexion*=humor of the body, constitutional tendency. "According to the old humoral pathology, there were four principal moistures or humors in the body, choler, melancholy, phlegm, and blood, on the due proportion and combination of which, the disposition of body and mind depended." — Stormonth.]

30. *plausible*: for plausible, or approved.

Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
 Being nature's livery, or fortune's star; —  
 Their virtues else — be they as pure as grace,  
 As infinite as man may undergo —  
 Shall in the general censure take corruption  
 From that particular fault: the dram of evil  
 Doth all the noble substance oft adulter  
 To his own scandal.

*Hor.*

Look, my lord, it comes!

*Enter Ghost.*

*Ham.* Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd 40  
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
 Thou comest in such a questionable shape

34. [as man may undergo: "as can be accumulated upon man." — Dr. Johnson]

36. the dram of evil. The original has here "The dram of eale," and at the end of the next line, "*of a doubt.*" This passage is found only in the quarto of 1604, where we know it was printed from manuscript [and in subsequent quartos. Lines 17–38 are omitted in the folios.] The destructive confusion of the quarto text is plainly the result, in part, of an effort to make *something* out of copy that could not be deciphered. It seems to me that *eale* is a phonetic error for *evil* (that word and *devil* having been, like *spirit*, pronounced sometimes as two syllables and sometimes as one; in the quarto we have *deal* twice for *devil*), and that, as to the next line, the form of the letters, hardly less than the general sense of the passage and the particular words, *corruption* and *scandal*, which immediately precede and follow it, indicate the word in this text, which, strange to say, would seem the only possible word that has not heretofore been proposed. [Steevens, after experimenting, finally read "often dout," the last word being a provincial expression for "do out" or "extinguish." In this he has frequently been followed. See, also, Act IV., sc. vii., l. 190.]

43. questionable = to be questioned.

That I will speak to thee : I'll call thee Hamlet,  
 King, father : royal Dane, oh, answer me !  
 Let me not burst in ignorance ; but tell  
 Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,  
 Have burst their cerements ; why the sepulchre,  
 Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,  
 Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,  
 To cast thee up again. What may this mean,  
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel  
 Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,  
 Making night hideous, and we fools of nature  
 So horridly to shake our disposition  
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls ?  
 Say, why is this ? wherefore ? what should we do ?

50

[*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*]

*Hor.* It beckons you to go away with it,  
 As if it some impartment did desire  
 To you alone.

*Mar.* Look, with what courteous action  
 It waves you to a more removed ground :  
 But do not go with it.

60

*Hor.* No, by no means.

45. [King, father: royal Dane. The old copies have a comma only, between *father* and *royal*. What is the great advantage of the present punctuation ?]

47. [canonized: accent on second syllable.]

48. cerements = shroud or grave clothes of waxed cloth.

54. [we fools of nature: "After a conjunction and before an infinitive we often find *I, thou, &c.*, where in Latin we should have *me, te, &c.* The conjunction seems to be regarded as introducing a new sentence, instead of connecting one clause with another." — Abbott's *Shakesperian Grammar*, § 216.]

56. [Compare the Hymn to Pan, in *Endymion*, Book I.:—

"Solitary thinkings, such as dodge  
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
 Then leave the naked brain."]



*Ham.* It will not speak ; then will I follow it.

*Hor.* Do not, my lord.

*Ham.* Why, what should be the fear ?  
I do not set my life at a pin's fee ;  
And for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal as itself ?  
It waves me forth again : I'll follow it.

*Hor.* What if it tempt you toward the flood, my  
lord,

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff 70  
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,  
And there assume some other horrible form,  
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason  
And draw you into madness ? think of it :  
The very place puts toys of desperation,  
Without more motive, into every brain  
That looks so many fathoms to the sea  
And hears it roar beneath.

*Ham.* It waves me still.

Go on ; I'll follow thee.

*Mar.* You shall not go, my lord.

*Ham.* Hold off your hands. 80

*Hor.* Be ruled ; you shall not go.

*Ham.* My fate cries out,  
And makes each petty artery in this body

73. **deprive your sovereignty of reason**: a reckless inversion, for rhythm's sake, of "deprive your reason of sovereignty" (as in Sonnet CXXVI., "Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour"); or else an almost equally reckless use of "deprive," to mean take away.

75. [**toys**=freaks.]

82. **artery**. Some notion of the occasional stumbling blocks through which editors of Shakespeare pick their way may be gathered from the quarto spelling of this word, *arture*, that is *ar-tur-e*. [The folios have *artire*. The quarto of 1676 supplies the present reading.]

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.  
 Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
 By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!  
 I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*]

*Hor.* He waxes desperate with imagination.

*Mar.* Let's follow; 't is not fit thus to obey him.

*Hor.* Have after. To what issue will this come?

*Mar.* Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

90

*Hor.* Heaven will direct it.

*Mar.* Nay, let's follow him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V. *Another part of the platform.*

*Enter Ghost and HAMLET.*

*Ham.* Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.

*Ghost.* Mark me.

*Ham.* I will.

*Ghost.* My hour is almost come,  
 When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames  
 Must render up myself.

*Ham.* Alas, poor ghost!

*Ghost.* Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing  
 To what I shall unfold.

*Ham.* Speak; I am bound to hear.

*Ghost.* So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

83. *Nemean lion*: the lion that Hercules overcame. [For the unusual accent see, also, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV., sc. i., l. 90.]

85. *lets* = hinders, stops.

6. [*bound*: "Hamlet uses the word in the sense of *ready addressed*, the Ghost uses it as the past participle of the verb to *bind*." Delius, quoted by Dr. Furness.]

*Ham.* What?

*Ghost.* I am thy father's spirit,  
 Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night, 10  
 And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
 Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
 To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
 Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part  
 And each particular hair to stand an end,  
 Like quills upon the fretful porpentine ; 20  
 But this eternal blazon must not be  
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, Hamlet, list!  
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love —

*Ham.* O God !

*Ghost.* Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

*Ham.* Murder !

*Ghost.* Murder most foul, as in the best it is ;  
 But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

*Ham.* Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift

11. to fast in fires. Hunger was believed to be one of the torments of hell.

17. [their spheres: see note on Act IV., sc. vii., l. 15.]

19. [an end: *a*, prefixed to nouns, adjectives, and participles, "represents some preposition, as 'in,' 'on,' 'of,' etc., contracted by rapidity of pronunciation, . . . and takes an *n* before a vowel for euphony." Abbott's Shakespearian Grammar, § 24.]

20. porpentine. Shakespeare knew no other name for the porcupine.

21. [eternal blazon: proclamation of eternal mysteries; a case of transferred epithet.]

As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

*Ghost.*

I find thee apt;

And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:  
'T is given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,  
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forged process of my death  
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

*Ham.*

O my prophetic soul!

Mine uncle!

*Ghost.* Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts, —  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce! — won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:  
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine!  
But virtue, as it never will be moved,  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,

33. *Lethe wharf*=the banks of Lethe, the river of oblivion.

37. [*process*: the Clarendon Press editors note that the word "has here, perhaps, the sense of an official narrative, coming nearly to the meaning of the French *procès verbal*."] ]

52. *To those of mine*. This illogical construction is the result of mere carelessness. It was not English in Shakespeare's day more than it is now.

So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed,  
 And prey on garbage.  
 But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;  
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
 My custom always of the afternoon, 60  
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
 And in the porches of my ears did pour  
 The leperous distilment; whose effect  
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
 And with a sudden vigor it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine; 70  
 And a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,  
 All my smooth body.  
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd:  
 Cut off even in the blossom of my sin,  
 Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled,

61. *secure*=without care, unsuspecting, and so unguarded.

62. *hebenon*=perhaps henbane, perhaps ebony.

64. [*leperous*=producing leprosy, or a similar effect.]

68. [*doth posset*: a posset was milk curdled with wine; hence the present verb, helped out by the line which follows, — a verb-metaphor running into simile.]

69. *eager*: sharp, sour.

71. [*instant*=appearing immediately. *bark'd*=covered as with bark.]

72. *lazar-like*=like one with leprosy. [*lazar* comes from Lazarus in the parable.]

77. *Unhousel'd*=without the last sacrament; *disappointed*=without proper appointment or preparation; *unaneled*=without extreme unction.

No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
 With all my imperfections on my head :  
 Oh, horrible ! oh, horrible ! most horrible ! 80  
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not ;  
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
 But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,  
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
 Against thy mother aught : leave her to heaven  
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,  
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once !  
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,  
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire : 90  
 Adieu, adieu ! Hamlet, remember me. [Exit.]

*Ham.* O all you host of heaven ! O earth ! what  
 else ?

And shall I couple hell ! Oh, fie ! Hold, hold, my  
 heart ;

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee !  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee !

Yea, from the table of my memory  
 I 'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, 100  
 That youth and observation copied there ;  
 And thy commandment all alone shall live  
 Within the book and volume of my brain,  
 Unmix'd with baser matter : yes, by heaven !

80. *Oh, horrible*: not improbably this line should be an exclamation by Hamlet. [Garriek so gave it.]

99. *fond records*=trivial, foolish memories.

100. *saws*=adages, proverbs. [*pressures*=impressions; see note on tables, l. 107.]

O most pernicious woman !  
 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain !  
 My tables, — meet it is I set it down,  
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain ;  
 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark :

[ *Writing.*

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word ; 110  
 It is “ Adieu, adieu ! remember me.”  
 I have sworn ’t.

*Mar.* } [ *Within.* ] My lord, my lord, —  
*Hor.* }

*Mar.* [ *Within.* ] Lord Hamlet, —

*Hor.* [ *Within.* ] Heaven secure him !

*Ham.* So be it !

*Hor.* [ *Within.* ] Hillo, ho, ho, my lord !

*Ham.* Hillo, ho, ho, boy ! come, bird, come.

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

*Mar.* How is ’t, my noble lord ?

*Hor.* What news, my lord ?

*Ham.* Oh, wonderful !

*Hor.* Good my lord, tell it.

*Ham.* No ; you ’ll reveal it.

*Hor.* Not I, my lord, by heaven.

*Mar.* Nor I, my lord. 120

*Ham.* How say you, then ; would heart of man  
 once think it ?

But you ’ll be secret ?

*Hor.* }  
*Mar.* } Ay, by heaven, my lord.

107. *tables* = note - book ; sometimes called a table - book :  
 from *tabula* (Lat.) = a thin board covered with wax, for writ-  
 ing.

115. [*Hillo, ho, ho* : the falconer’s call to the hawk ; an-  
 swered by Hamlet in the same manner, with additional terms of  
 falconry.]



*Ham.* There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark

But he's an arrant knave.

*Hor.* There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave

To tell us this.

*Ham.* Why, right; you are i' th' right;

And so, without more circumstance at all,

I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:

You, as your business and desire shall point you;

For every man has business and desire,

130

Such as it is; and for mine own poor part,

Look you, I'll go pray.

*Hor.* These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

*Ham.* I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;

Yes, 'faith, heartily.

*Hor.*

There's no offence, my lord.

*Ham.* Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,

And much offence too. Touching this vision here,

It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:

For your desire to know what is between us,

O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends, 140

As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,

Give me one poor request.

*Hor.* What is 't, my lord? we will.

*Ham.* Never make known what you have seen to-night.

*Hor.* { My lord, we will not.

*Mar.* }

*Ham.*

Nay, but swear 't.

*Hor.*

In faith,

My lord, not I.

*Mar.* Nor I, my lord, in faith.

*Ham.* Upon my sword.

*Mar.* We have sworn, my lord, already.

*Ham.* Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath.*] Swear.

*Ham.* Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there,  
truepenny? 150

Come on — you hear this fellow in the cellarage —

Consent to swear.

*Hor.* Propose the oath, my lord.

*Ham.* Never to speak of this that you have seen,

Swear by my sword.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath.*] Swear.

*Ham.* *Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground.

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword:

Never to speak of this that you have heard,

Swear by my sword. 150

*Ghost.* [*Beneath.*] Swear.

*Ham.* Well said, old mole! canst work i' th' earth  
so fast?

A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.

147. **upon my sword**: the handle and the hilt of the sword made a cross, and, besides, the sword itself, was honored.

150. [*Ah, ha, boy! . . . truepenny?* These wild exclamations of Hamlet are a reminiscence of the familiar language of the Vice, or jester, in the old Moralities, when addressing the Devil, often under the stage. They must have been well understood by an Elizabethan audience; and they are uttered in the same spirit as the falconer's cry, l. 115.]

153. [The folios place a period after **seen**. So, in lines 158–159, the folios have no pause after **sword**, and place either a colon or a period after **heard**. But the present punctuation is on the whole more natural.]

156. *Hic et ubique*=here and everywhere. (Lat.)

*Hor.* O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

*Ham.* And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

But come;

Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,  
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself, 170  
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on,  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,  
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,  
As "Well, well, we know," or "We could, an if we  
would,"

Or "If we list to speak," or "There be, an if they  
might,"

Or such ambiguous giving out, to note  
That you know aught of me: this not to do,  
So grace and mercy at your most need help you, 180  
Swear.

*Ghost.* [*Beneath.*] Swear.

[*They raise their hands to heaven and kiss Hamlet's sword hilt.*]

*Ham.* Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! — So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you:

167. [*our philosophy*: this is the folio reading, and doubtless means human philosophy. The quartos read "your," which, as Dr. Furness remarks, is used ethically.]

172. [*antic*=fantastic.]

174. [*With arms encumber'd thus.* "At these words it is usual for Hamlets to fold their arms and look mysterious. Irving takes the arm of one of his companions, as he supposes they may take each other's hereafter, and assumes a confidential air, as if the two were comparing their past recollections." — Edward R. Russell.]

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is  
 May do, to express his love and friending to you,  
 God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together ;  
 And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.  
 The time is out of joint : O cursed spite,  
 That ever I was born to set it right !  
 Nay, come, let 's go together.

189

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT II.

SCENE I. *A room in POLONIUS' house.**Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO.*

*Pol.* Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

*Rey.* I will, my lord.

*Pol.* You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,

Before you visit him, to make inquiry  
 Of his behaviour.

*Rey.* My lord, I did intend it.

*Pol.* Marry, well said ; very well said. Look you, sir,

Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris ;  
 And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,  
 What company, at what expense ; and finding  
 By this encompassment and drift of question 10  
 That they do know my son, come you more nearer  
 Than your particular demands will touch it :  
 Take you, as 't were, some distant knowledge of him ;

7. *Danskens.* So the Danes call themselves.

11. *more nearer.* The double comparative and superlative are in constant use by Shakespeare.

As thus, "I know his father and his friends,  
And in part him:" do you mark this, Reynaldo?

*Rey.* Ay, very well, my lord.

*Pol.* "And in part him; but," you may say, "not  
well.

But, if 't be he I mean, he's very wild;  
Addicted so and so:" and there put on him  
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank 20  
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;  
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips  
As are companions noted and most known  
To youth and liberty.

*Rey.* As gaming, my lord.

*Pol.* Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrel-  
ling,

Drabbing: you may go so far.

*Rey.* My lord, that would dishonour him.

*Pol.* 'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge  
You must not put another scandal on him,  
That he is open to incontinency; 30  
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so  
quaintly

That they may seem the taints of liberty,  
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,  
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,  
Of general assault.

29, 30. another scandal . . . incontinency. This is quite irreconcilable with line 26. [Keightley and Hudson read *than* instead of *that*, in line 30; which disposes of the difficulty. But the old copies give no warrant for the change.]

31. *quaintly*=with delicate contrivance.

34. [*unreclaimed*=untamed. To reclaim, meaning to make gentle, was a term of falconry.]

35. [*Of general assault*=assailing, as a temptation, all young men.]

*Rey.* But, my good lord, —

*Pol.* Wherefore should you do this?

*Rey.* Ay, my lord,

I would know that.

*Pol.* Marry, sir, here's my drift;

And, I believe, it is a fetch of wit:

You laying these slight sullies on my son,

As 't were a thing a little soil'd i' th' working,

Mark you,

Your party in converse, him you would sound,

Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes

The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured

He closes with you in this consequence:

"Good sir," or so, or "friend," or "gentleman,"

According to the phrase or the addition

Of man and country.

*Rey.* Very good, my lord.

*Pol.* And then, sir, does he this — he does — what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave? 51

*Rey.* At "closes in the consequence," at "friend or so," and "gentleman."

*Pol.* At "closes in the consequence," ay, marry; He closes thus: "I know the gentleman; I saw him yesterday, or t' other day, Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you say, There was he gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse; There falling out at tennis." 60

See you now;

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:

38. [fetch of wit = witty, or cunning, device. The folios have "of warrant;" meaning an approved device.]

47. addition = style and title: the "handle" to his name.

58. [o'ertook in's rouse = overtaken "in his cups," i. e., intoxicated.]

And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,  
 With windlasses and with assays of bias,  
 By indirections find directions out :  
 So by my former lecture and advice,  
 Shall you my son. You have me, have you not ?

*Rey.* My lord, I have.

*Pol.* God b' wi' you ; fare you well.

*Rey.* Good my lord.

*Pol.* Observe his inclination in yourself.

*Rey.* I shall, my lord.

70

*Pol.* And let him 'ply his music.

*Rey.*

Well, my lord.

*Pol.* Farewell !

[*Exit Reynaldo.*]

*Enter OPHELIA.*

How now, Ophelia ! what's the matter ?

*Oph.* O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted !

*Pol.* With what, in the name of God ?

*Oph.* My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,  
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced ;  
 No hat upon his head ; his stockings foul'd,  
 Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle ;  
 Pale as his shirt ; his knees knocking each other ;  
 And with a look so piteous in purport  
 As if he had been loosed out of hell  
 To speak of horrors, — he comes before me.

80

*Pol.* Mad for thy love ?

63. **windlasses** = circuitous ways. [**assays of bias** = indirect attempts ; “ a metaphor,” the Clarendon Press editors point out, “ from the game of bowls, in which the player does not aim at the Jack directly, but in a curve, so that the bias brings the ball round.”]

71. **'ply his music** = apply, that is, study, practice his music : the customary use of “ apply ” in Shakespeare's day.

76. [**unbraced** = unfastened.]

78. **down-gyved** = hanging about his ankles, like gyves.



*Oph.* My lord, I do not know ;  
But truly, I do fear it.

*Pol.* What said he ?

*Oph.* He took me by the wrist and held me hard ;  
Then goes he to the length of all his arm :  
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,  
He falls to such perusal of my face  
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so ;  
At last, a little shaking of mine arm 90  
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound  
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being : that done, he lets me go ;  
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,  
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes ;  
For out o' doors he went without their help,  
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

*Pol.* Come, go with me : I will go seek the King.  
This is the very ecstasy of love, 100  
Whose violent property fordoes itself  
And leads the will to desperate undertakings  
As oft as any passion under heaven  
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.  
What, have you given him any hard words of late ?

*Oph.* No, my good lord, but, as you did command,  
I did repel his letters and denied  
His access to me.

*Pol.* That hath made him mad.  
I am sorry that with better heed and judgement  
I had not quoted him : I fear'd he did but trifle, 110

93. As it did seem : the folio, " *That it,*" etc., a modernization ; bulk=body, exclusive of head and limbs, trunk.

101. [fordoes=destroys.]

110. quoted : loosely used for "observed."



That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court  
Some little time : so by your companies  
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,  
So much as from occasion you may glean,  
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,  
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

*Queen.* Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of  
you ;

And sure I am two men there are not living 20  
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
To show us so much gentry and good will  
As to expend your time with us awhile,  
For the supply and profit of our hope,  
Your visitation shall receive such thanks  
As fits a king's remembrance.

*Ros.* Both your majesties  
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,  
Put your dread pleasures more into command  
Than to entreaty.

*Guil.* But we both obey,  
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent 30  
To lay our service freely at your feet,  
To be commanded.

*King.* Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guilden-  
stern.

*Queen.* Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosen-  
crantz :

And I beseech you instantly to visit  
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,  
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

*Guil.* Heavens make our presence and our prac-  
tices

17. [Whether : contracted to a monosyllable in rendering the  
line.]

22. gentry = gentleness, politeness, courtesy.

Pleasant and helpful to him !

*Queen.*

Ay, amen !

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants.]*

*Enter* POLONIUS.

*Pol.* Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,

40

Are joyfully return'd.

*King.* Thou still hast been the father of good news.

*Pol.* Have I, my lord ? I assure my good liege,  
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,  
Both to my God and to my gracious king :  
And I do think, or else this brain of mine  
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure  
As it hath used to do, that I have found  
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

49

*King.* Oh, speak of that ; that do I long to hear.

*Pol.* Give first admittance to th' ambassadors ;  
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

*King.* Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

*[Exit Polonius.]*

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

*Queen.* I doubt it is no other but the main,  
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

*King.* Well, we shall sift him.

*Re-enter* POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends !

Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway ?

*Volt.* Most fair return of greetings and desires. 60  
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress  
His nephew's levies ; which to him appear'd  
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack ;

43. [The folios read "Assure you, my good liege," with the force of "Assure yourself," — a better line.]

But, better look'd into, he truly found  
It was against your highness : whereat grieved,  
That so his sickness, age and impotence  
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests  
On Fortinbras ; which he, in brief, obeys ;  
Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine  
Makes vow before his uncle never more 70  
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.  
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,  
And his commission to employ those soldiers,  
So levied as before, against the Polack :  
With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a paper.*  
That it might please you to give quiet pass  
Through your dominions for this enterprise,  
On such regards of safety and allowance  
As therein are set down.

*King.* It likes us well : 80  
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,  
Answer, and think upon this business.  
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour :  
Go to your rest ; at night we'll feast together :  
Most welcome home ! [*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

*Pol.* This business is well ended.  
My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
What majesty should be, what duty is,  
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,  
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.  
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit, 90  
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
I will be brief : your noble son is mad :  
Mad call I it ; for, to define true madness,  
What is 't but to be nothing else but mad ?

But let that go.

*Queen.* More matter, with less art.

*Pol.* Madam, I swear I use no art at all.

That he is mad, 't is true: 't is true 't is pity;

And pity 't is 't is true; a foolish figure;

But farewell it, for I will use no art.

Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains

100

That we find out the cause of this effect,

Or rather say, the cause of this defect,

For this effect defective comes by cause:

Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.

Perpend.

I have a daughter — have while she is mine —

Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,

Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise. [*Reads.*

“To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,” —

109

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; “beautified” is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus: [*Reads.*

“In her excellent white bosom, these, etc.”

*Queen.* Came this from Hamlet to her?

*Pol.* Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful. [*Reads.*

“Doubt thou the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar;

But never doubt I love.

“O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

121

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him,

HAMLET.”

105. [*perpend* = consider attentively.]

122. whilst this machine, etc. = while this frame, this body, exists for him.

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,  
And more above, hath his solicitings,  
As they fell out by time, by means and place,  
All given to mine ear.

*King.* But how hath she  
Received his love?

*Pol.* What do you think of me?

*King.* As of a man faithful and honourable.

*Pol.* I would fain prove so. But what might you  
think, 130

When I had seen this hot love on the wing —  
As I perceived it, I must tell you that,  
Before my daughter told me — what might you,  
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,  
If I had played the desk or table-book,  
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,  
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;  
What might you think? No, I went round to  
work,

And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:  
“ Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star; 140  
This must not be:” and then I precepts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;  
And he, repulsed — a short tale to make —  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,

135. the desk or table-book, by means of which they  
might communicate their love.

138. [round = vigorously.]

140. thy star = thy sphere; thy scheme of nativity — with a  
mingling of astronomy and astrology.

Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And all we mourn for.

*King.* Do you think 't is this? 150

*Queen.* It may be, very likely.

*Pol.* Hath there been such a time — I 'd fain know  
that —

That I have positively said "'T is so,"

When it proved otherwise?

*King.* Not that I know.

*Pol.* [*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*] Take  
this from this, if this be otherwise:

If circumstances lead me, I will find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed

Within the centre.

*King.* How may we try it further?

*Pol.* You know, sometimes he walks four hours  
together

Here in the lobby.

*Queen.* So he does indeed. 160

*Pol.* At such a time I'll loose my daughter to  
him:

Be you and I behind an arras then;

Mark the encounter: if he love her not

And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,

Let me be no assistant for a state,

But keep a farm and carters.

*King.* We will try it.

*Queen.* But, look, where sadly the poor wretch  
comes reading.

158. the centre, of the earth.

159. four hours: "four" was used in a general way, as we say  
"half a dozen," meaning a small indefinite number; but perhaps  
Shakespeare wrote "for hours."



*Pol.* Away, I do beseech you, both away:  
I'll board him presently.

[*Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.*

*Enter HAMLET, reading.*

Oh, give me leave:

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

170

*Ham.* Well, God-a-mercy.

*Pol.* Do you know me, my lord?

*Ham.* Excellent well; you're a fishmonger.

*Pol.* Not I, my lord.

*Ham.* Then I would you were so honest a man.

*Pol.* Honest, my lord!

*Ham.* Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is  
to be one man pick'd out of ten thousand.

*Pol.* That's very true, my lord.

*Ham.* For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,  
being a god kissing carrion, — Have you a daughter?

*Pol.* I have, my lord.

182

*Ham.* Let her not walk i' th' sun: friend, look  
to 't.

*Pol.* How say you by that? [*Aside.*] Still harp-  
ing on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he  
said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone:

169. [board him = accost him. See *Twelfth Night*, Act I.,  
sc. iii., l. 60.]

173. [a fishmonger: "That is, not a person sent to fish out  
his secrets, as Coleridge would explain it, but a dealer in stale-  
ness, and yet not so honest as those who only vend stale fish."  
John Weiss.]

180. For if the sun, etc. Hamlet reads, or pretends to read,  
this in his book. [a god kissing carrion: this is Warburton's  
emendation, and certainly gives a satisfactory sense; though the  
reading of quartos and folios, "a good kissing carrion," i. e., a  
carrion good for kissing, has been ably defended. Compare  
"Common-kissing Titan," *Cymbeline*, Act III., sc. iv., 164; and  
*Measure for Measure*, Act II., sc. ii., 163-168.]

and truly in my youth I suffer'd much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. —  
What do you read, my lord?

190

*Ham.* Words, words, words.

*Pol.* What is the matter, my lord?

*Ham.* Between who?

*Pol.* I mean, the matter that you read, my lord?

*Ham.* Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

203

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. — Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

*Ham.* Into my grave.

*Pol.* Indeed, that is out o' th' air. [*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be deliver'd of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter. — My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

214

*Ham.* You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: [*Aside*] except my life, except my life, except my life.

*Pol.* Fare you well, my lord.

*Ham.* These tedious old fools!

202. should be old: that is, as old, of my age.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

*Pol.* You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

*Ros.* [*To Polonius.*] God save you, sir! 221

[*Exit Polonius.*]

*Guil.* Mine honour'd lord!

*Ros.* My most dear lord!

*Ham.* My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

*Ros.* As the indifferent children of the earth.

*Guil.* Happy, in that we are not over-happy;  
On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

*Ham.* Nor the soles of her shoes? 239

*Ros.* Neither, my lord.

*Ham.* What's the news?

*Ros.* None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

*Ham.* Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

*Guil.* Prison, my lord! 240

*Ham.* Denmark's a prison.

*Ros.* Then is the world one.

*Ham.* A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst.

*Ros.* We think not so, my lord.

*Ham.* Why, then, 'tis none to you: for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

*Ros.* Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind. 250

*Ham.* O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell

and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

*Guil.* Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

*Ham.* A dream itself is but a shadow.

*Ros.* Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow. 259

*Ham.* Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

*Ros.* } We'll wait upon you.  
*Guil.* }

*Ham.* No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore? 269

*Ros.* To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

*Ham.* Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks: but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

*Guil.* What should we say, my lord?

264. [We'll wait upon you. Apparently Rosencrantz and Guildenstern reply with alacrity to Hamlet's proposal, "We will attend; i. e., accompany, you." But the Prince, with a quick thrust at their obsequiousness, plays on the words wait upon you, as if they had offered to join his retinue. This is precisely the reverse of his conduct toward Horatio, Act I., sc. ii., lines 162, 163. sort you=rank you, place you.]

268. what make you?=what do you? [See Act I., sc. ii., l. 164.]

*Ham.* Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good King and Queen have sent for you. 281

*Ros.* To what end, my lord?

*Ham.* That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no?

*Ros.* [*Aside to Guil.*] What say you?

*Ham.* [*Aside.*] Nay, then, I have an eye of you. — If you love me, hold not off. 291

*Guil.* My lord, we were sent for.

*Ham.* I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moult no feather. I have of late — but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, for-gone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express

277. [*but to the purpose*: “Say anything, if only it be to the purpose;” at the same time, as Clarke observes, the phrase includes the exactly contrary effect of “except,” and therefore contains a covert sarcasm.]

294. [*prevent*=forestall.]

and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

311

*Ros.* My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

*Ham.* Why did you laugh then, when I said "man delights not me"?

*Ros.* To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

*Ham.* He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' th' sear; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they?

327

*Ros.* Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

*Ham.* How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

*Ros.* I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

318. *coted*=overtook, came up beside: from the French *cote*=side.

325. *tickle o' th' sear*=quick on the trigger, easily moved. The sear is that part of a gun-lock, upon which the trigger acts: and *tickle*=very sensitive to touch. The whole phrase was in use in Shakespeare's time.

332, 333. [It is clear enough that this conversation about the

*Ham.* Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so follow'd?

*Ros.* No, indeed, are they not.

*Ham.* How comes it? do they grow rusty?

*Ros.* Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapp'd for 't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages — so they call them — that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither. 344

*Ham.* What, are they children? who maintains

players carries us far from Denmark. All the allusions are to the happenings of Shakespeare's own time in his own city. But it is not so clear that **innovation** means the fashion of having child players, which is spoken of later. It is certainly strange that Rosencrantz should reply to Hamlet's question, l. 330, by alluding to a fact which we find, in lines 344 *et seq.*, to be utterly unknown to the Prince. Steevens suggests that "their permission to act any longer at an established house is taken away in consequence of the new custom of introducing personal abuse into their comedies;" but other commentators demonstrate that personal abuse was no novelty. Dr. Johnson's simple note is most satisfying to the ordinary reader: "Hamlet inquires not about an 'inhibition,' but an 'innovation;' the answer probably was, 'I think their *innovation*,' that is, their new practice of strolling, 'comes by means of the late '*inhibition*,'" — *i. e.*, prohibitory order of the Privy Council, made, according to Mr. Fleay, in 1601.]

340. **eyases**=nestlings; young hawks. [**cry out on the top of question** is explained by Mr. White as "assert superiority;" by Staunton as "crow over or challenge all comers to a contention;" and by most other authorities as "speak in a high key." **question**=dialogue, or perhaps argument.]

341. **tyrannically**=extravagantly, noisily; from the "tyrant's part" in old plays, which was conventionally one of extravagance and noise.]

342. [**berattle**=berate, scold vociferously.]

'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players — as it is most like, if their means are no better — their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession? 351

*Ros.* 'Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy; there was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

*Ham.* Is 't possible?

*Guil.* Oh, there has been much throwing about of brains.

*Ham.* Do the boys carry it away? 360

*Ros.* Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

*Ham.* It is not very strange; for mine uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within.*]

*Guil.* There are the players. 369

346. *escoted* = paid for; whence, pay scot.

347. [*the quality* = the actor's profession.]

353. *tarre* = set on, as dogs.

354. [*bid for argument* = advanced for the plot, or rough sketch, of a play.]

356. [*question* : here, dialogue.]

361. *Hercules and his load* = all the world, including our theatre. The sign of the Globe theatre was Hercules bearing the globe.

364. *make mows* = make mouths, make faces.



*Ham.* Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands : come then, the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony : let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome : but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

*Guil.* In what, my dear lord ?

*Ham.* I am but mad north-north-west : when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*Enter* POLONIUS.

*Pol.* Well be with you, gentlemen ! 380

*Ham.* [*Aside to them.*] Hark you, Guildenstern ! and you too : at each ear a hearer : that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts.

*Ros.* Haply he's the second time come to them ; for they say an old man is twice a child.

*Ham.* I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players ; mark it. [*Aloud.*] You say right, sir : o' Monday morning ; 't was so indeed.

*Pol.* My lord, I have news to tell you.

*Ham.* My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome, — 391

*Pol.* The actors are come hither, my lord.

*Ham.* Buz, buz !

*Pol.* Upon mine honour, —

*Ham.* Then came each actor on his ass, —

372. comply = use ceremony, compliment. [in this garb = after this fashion.]

373. [extent = welcome extended.]

379. a hawk from a handsaw : an alliterative comparison in use in Shakespeare's time, in which handsaw is a corruption of heronshaw, and hawk refers both to the bird of prey and to a cutting tool.

393. Buz, buz : an exclamation of impatience at a tedious tale.

*Pol.* The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. 402

*Ham.* O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

*Pol.* What a treasure had he, my lord?

*Ham.* Why,

“One fair daughter, and no more,  
The which he loved passing well.”

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] Still on my daughter.

*Ham.* Am I not i' th' right, old Jephthah? 410

*Pol.* If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

*Ham.* Nay, that follows not.

*Pol.* What follows, then, my lord?

*Ham.* Why,

“As by lot, God wot,”

and then, you know,

“It came to pass, as most like it was,” —

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look, where my abridgement comes. 420

*Enter four or five Players.*

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. Oh, my old

401. For the law of writ and the liberty: these words allude to something known to Shakespeare and his audience, but unknown to us.

419. *chanson*=song. [*French.*]

420. *abridgement*: the players cut Hamlet short, and “*abridgement*” also=pastime.

friend! thy face is valanced since I saw thee last: com'st thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers — fly at any thing we see: we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech. 432

*First Play.* What speech, my lord?

*Ham.* I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 't was caviare to the general: but it was — as I received it, and others, whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine — an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter

423. [*valanced*=fringed.]

425. *my young lady*=the young actor who played women's parts: there were no actresses in England until Charles II.'s time.

427. *chopine*=a sort of high clog worn by women: an Italian fashion.

428. *crack'd within the ring.* The old coins had a ring around the head of the monarch, and, being thin, they cracked; if within this ring, they would not pass. The cracking of the voice at adolescence is of course referred to.

437. *caviare*=the well known Russian condiment made from sturgeon's roe, the taste for which is not general.

438. [*cried in the top of mine*=excelled mine; a metaphor taken from a "cry," or pack, of hounds.]

441. *sallets*=sharp things, seasoned like salad.

in the phrase that might indict the author of affection; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 't was *Æneas'* tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line: let me see, let me see —

“The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,” —  
it is not so: it begins with Pyrrhus: — 451

“The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd  
With heraldry more dismal; head to foot  
Now is he total gules; horribly trick'd  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,  
That lend a tyrannous and damned light 456  
To their lords' murther: roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'er sized with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks.”

So, proceed you.

*Pol.* 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

*First Play.* Anon he finds him  
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,  
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls, 470  
Repugnant to command: unequal match'd  
Pyrrhus at Priam drives: in rage strikes wide;

443. **affection**=affecting.

445. [**more handsome than fine**=more truly beautiful than elaborate and artificial.]

457. **gules**=red, an heraldic term. [**trick'd**=ornamented, bepainted.]

462. **o'er-sized**=varnished, pasted over, as with size.

But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword  
 Th' unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,  
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top  
 Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash  
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear; for, lo! his sword,  
 Which was declining on the milky head  
 Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air to stick:  
 So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,  
 And like a neutral to his will and matter,  
 Did nothing.

480

But, as we often see, against some storm,  
 A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
 The bold winds speechless and the orb below  
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder  
 Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
 Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;  
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
 On Mars's armour forged for proof eterne  
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword  
 Now falls on Priam.

490

Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,  
 In general synod, take away her power;  
 Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,  
 And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,  
 As low as to the fiends!"

484. **the rack** = the clouds in the highest region.

497. **As low as to the fiends.** This speech is probably taken from the unsuccessful work of some fellow playwright of Shakespeare's, whom he wished to console and praise. [Mr. Fleay thinks Shakespeare himself experimented, in rivalry with Nash, — who was successful, — in supplementing Marlowe's unfinished play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Opinions vary, not only as to the probable authorship of the fragment, but as to its value. Dryden was very severe upon it; Pope thought Hamlet's praise of it purely ironical. Coleridge, on the contrary, says: "The fancy that a burlesque is intended sinks below criticism; the lines, as epic narrative, are superb. In the thoughts, and even in the separate parts of the diction, this description is highly poetical; in truth, taken by itself, that is its fault, that it is too poetical, — the language of lyric vehemence and epic pomp, and not of the drama."]

*Pol.* This is too long.

*Ham.* It shall to the barber's, with your beard.  
Prithee, say on : he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or  
he sleeps : say on : come to Hecuba. 501

*First Play.* "But who, oh, who had seen the mobled queen —"

*Ham.* "The mobled queen?"

*Pol.* That's good ; "mobled queen" is good.

*First Play.* "Run barefoot up and down, threatening the  
flames

With bisson rheum ; a clout upon that head  
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,  
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,  
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up :  
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd, 510  
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced :  
But if the gods themselves did see her then,  
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport  
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,  
The instant burst of clamour that she made,  
Unless things mortal move them not at all,  
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,  
And passion in the gods."

*Pol.* Look, whe'er he has not turn'd his colour  
and has tears in 's eyes. Pray you, no more. 520

*Ham.* 'T is well ; I'll have thee speak out the rest  
soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well  
bestow'd ? Do you hear, let them be well used ; for  
they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the  
time : after your death you were better have a bad  
epitaph than their ill report while you live.

502. *mobled* = with head wrapped up ; whence, mob-cap.

506. *bisson rheum* = blinding tears. See the widow, in  
*Much Ado About Nothing*, who was "an hour in clamour and a  
quarter in rheum."

517. *milch* = milky, moist.

519. *whe'er* = whether, as elsewhere.

*Pol.* My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

*Ham.* God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

*Pol.* Come, sirs.

*Ham.* Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit Polonius with all the Players but the First.*] Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

*First Play.* Ay, my lord.

539

*Ham.* We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

*First Play.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit First Player.*] My good friends, I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

*Ros.* Good my lord!

549

*Ham.* Ay, so, God b' wi' ye. [*Exeunt Rosen-  
crantz and Guildenstern.*] Now I am alone.

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit  
That from her working all his visage wann'd,  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting

554. [*conceit*=conception, imagination.]

557. [*function*=action.]

With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!  
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, 560  
That he should weep for her? What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears  
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, 570  
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?  
Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,  
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face,  
'Tweaks me by th' nose, gives me the lie i' th' throat,  
As deep as to the lungs, who does me this,  
Ha!

'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be  
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall 580  
To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
I should have fatted all the region kites

570. *John-a-dreams*=a dreamy, mooning Jack.

573. [*defeat*: Steevens notes that this word is very loosely used by the old writers, and cites examples from Middleton and Chapman, in which it seems to have the force of "undoing, ruin." In all these it is combined with the verb *make*.]

580. *lack gall*: pigeons and doves were supposed to be without gall in their bodies, and hence without bitterness in their dispositions.

582. [*the region kites*=the kites of the upper air. See l. 487.]



With this slave's offal : bloody, bawdy villain !  
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain !  
Oh, vengeance !

Why, what an ass am I ! This is most brave,  
That I, the son of the dear murdered,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,  
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,  
A scullion !

590

Fie upon 't ! foh ! About, my brain ! I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
Have by the very cunning of the scene  
Been struck so to the soul that presently  
They have proclaim'd their malefactions ;  
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ. I 'll have these players  
Play something like the murder of my father  
Before mine uncle : I 'll observe his looks ;  
I 'll tent him to the quick : if he but blench,  
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
May be the Devil : and the Devil hath power  
T' assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
As he is very potent with such spirits,  
Abuses me to damn me : I 'll have grounds

600

584. **kindless**=without the feelings proper to man, to my kind; [unnatural].

587. [The fourth and fifth quartos supply the more usual reading, "a dear father murdered."]

592. **About, my brain.** But Hamlet has already thought of introducing the dozen or sixteen lines alluding to his father's murder.

601. **tent**=probe. [**blench**=start, flinch.]

607. [**Abuses**=deludes.]

More relative than this : the play 's the thing  
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the King. [*Exit.*]

## ACT III.

SCENE I. *A room in the castle.*

*Enter* KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, and  
GUILDENSTERN.

*King.* And can you, by no drift of circumstance,  
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,  
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet  
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

*Ros.* He does confess he feels himself distracted ;  
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

*Guil.* Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,  
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,  
When we would bring him on to some confession  
Of his true state.

*Queen.* Did he receive you well? 10

*Ros.* Most like a gentleman.

*Guil.* But with much forcing of his disposition.

*Ros.* Most free of question ; but, of our demands,  
Niggard in his reply.

*Queen.* Did you assay him  
To any pastime?

608. [*relative*=to the purpose.]

13. *Most free of question.* The old copies have "Niggard of question," and, in the next line, "Most free in his reply ;" which is directly at variance not only with the fact, but, what is of much more importance where Shakespeare is concerned, with Guildenstern's description of Hamlet's conduct only five lines before, and Rosencrantz's, yet again before. Plainly there was an accidental transposition.

14. [*assay him*=try inviting him.]

*Ros.* Madam, it so fell out, that certain players  
We o'er-raught on the way : of these we told him ;  
And there did seem in him a kind of joy  
To hear of it. They are about the court,  
And, as I think, they have already order  
This night to play before him. 20

*Pol.* 'T is most true :  
And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties  
To hear and see the matter.

*King.* With all my heart ; and it doth much content me

To hear him so inclined.

Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,  
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

*Ros.* We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]

*King.* Sweet Gertrude, leave us too ;  
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,  
That he, as 't were by accident, may here  
Affront Ophelia : 30

Her father and myself, lawful espials,  
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,  
We may of their encounter frankly judge,  
And gather by him, as he is behaved,  
If 't be th' affliction of his love or no  
That thus he suffers for.

*Queen.* I shall obey you.  
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause  
Of Hamlet's wildness : so shall I hope your virtues 39

17. o'er-raught=overreached, overtook.

26. [give him a further edge=sharpen his appetite for these pleasures.]

31. Affront=meet face to face.

Will bring him to his wonted way again,  
To both your honours.

*Oph.* Madam, I wish it may. [*Exit Queen.*]

*Pol.* Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please  
you,

We will bestow ourselves. [*To Ophelia.*] Read on  
this book;

That show of such an exercise may colour  
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this, —  
'T is too much proved — that with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The Devil himself.

*King.* Oh, 't is too true!

[*Aside.*] How smart a lash that speech doth give  
my conscience!

50

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted word:  
O heavy burthen!

*Pol.* I hear him coming; let's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt King and Polonius.*]

*Enter HAMLET.*

*Ham.* To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

59. [*sea of troubles.* This mixed metaphor has given needless distress to the commentators. Shakespeare's mixed metaphors do not spring from the source that gives rise to the same fault in many other writers, — a weakness of the imagination, which fails to present images to the mind with sufficient force to make their inconsistency apparent. The cause of Shakespeare's confusion is the rapidity of his mind's action; each image is in itself clearly and boldly conceived, but the next image jostles it in the streaming, crowding outpour of his thought. Here criti-

And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep; 60  
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to, 't is a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die? to sleep?  
 To sleep perchance to dream: ay, there 's the rub;  
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
 Must give us pause: there 's the respect  
 That makes calamity of so long life;  
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, 70  
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
 The insolence of office and the spurns  
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,

cism is a fruitless labor; the true attitude is that of sympathetic appreciation. Try to stand where Shakespeare stood, in the centre of a time when words were not, as M. Taine has noted, exact symbols, but each a little picture or a little drama in itself. "To take arms"—against what? What is the forward surge of an advancing body of soldiers, to any living imagination, but a *sea* of men? There is in the figure the glint of weapons, the toss of plume and banner, and, above all, the steady inevitable sweep of the oncoming wave, with unestimated power behind it; a figure not to be criticised, but to be apprehended and remembered.]

64, 65. [To die? . . . dream: This is variously punctuated, the commas of the old copies giving little guidance. What is the force of the present punctuation?]

67. [coil: Caldecott has pointed out that this word is used in both senses, as "turmoil" and "that which wraps round."]

76. fardels = burthens, packs. The folio has "*these fardels*," which, as referring to the burthens of life already enumerated by Hamlet, has a strong claim to be received as the true reading.

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
 But that the dread of something after death,  
 The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of?  
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
 And enterprises of great pith and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry,  
 And lose the name of action. — Soft you now!  
 The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins remember'd.

*Oph.* Good my lord,

How does your honour for this many a day?

*Ham.* I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

*Oph.* My lord, I have remembrances of yours,  
 That I have longed long to re-deliver;  
 I pray you, now receive them.

*Ham.* No, not I;

I never gave you aught.

*Oph.* My honour'd lord, you know right well you  
 did;

And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed  
 As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,  
 Take these again; for to the noble mind  
 Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.  
 There, my lord.

*Ham.* Ha, ha! are you honest?

83. [conscience seems here to have its occasional meaning of "scrupulousness," but not in a moral sense. Compare the peculiar use of **scruple**, Act IV., sc. iv., l. 40.]

103. [honest=chaste.]

*Oph.* My lord!

*Ham.* Are you fair?

*Oph.* What means your lordship?

*Ham.* That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

*Oph.* Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty? 110

*Ham.* Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

*Oph.* Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

*Ham.* You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

*Oph.* I was the more deceived. 120

*Ham.* Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners! I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father? 131

*Oph.* At home, my lord.

*Ham.* Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

*Oph.* O, help him, you sweet heavens!

*Ham.* If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague

for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

*Op'h.* O heavenly powers, restore him! 144

*Ham.* I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [Exit.

*Op'h.* Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the honey of his music vows, 160  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh;  
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy: oh, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

*Re-enter KING and POLONIUS.*

*King.* Love! his affections do not that way tend;  
148. make your wantonness your ignorance=make an assumed ignorance cover wanton speech.

163. blown youth=blown into flower.

164. ecstasy=madness.

166. [affections=inclinings, disposition.]



Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,  
Was not like madness. There's something in his  
soul,

O'er which his melancholy sits on brood ;  
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose 170  
Will be some danger : which to prevent,  
I have in quick determination  
Thus set it down : he shall with speed to England,  
For the demand of our neglected tribute :  
Haply the seas and countries different  
With variable objects shall expel  
This something-settled matter in his heart,  
Whereon his brain's still beating puts him thus  
From fashion of himself. What think you on 't?

*Pol.* It shall do well : but yet do I believe 180  
The origin and commencement of his grief  
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!  
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said ;  
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please ;  
But, if you hold it fit, after the play  
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him  
To show his grief : let her be round with him ;  
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear  
Of all their conference. If she find him not,  
To England send him, or confine him where 190  
Your wisdom best shall think.

*King.* It shall be so :  
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A hall in the castle.*

*Enter HAMLET and Players.*

*Ham.* Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue : but if

you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently ; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Oh, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise : I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant : it out-herods Herod : pray you, avoid it.

15

*First Play.* I warrant your honour.

*Ham.* Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor : suit the action to the word, the word to the action ; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature : for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature : to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve ; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. Oh, there be players that I have seen play, and heard

11. groundlings = those in the pit who stood upon the ground.

12. are capable of = can comprehend, understand.

14. Termagant, a supposed god of the Saracens, was a stock personage in the old Moralities, in which he grinned and raved. So also was Herod, whose bombast and fury were monstrous and ridiculous.

others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor Turk, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

*First Play.* I hope we have reform'd that indifferently with us, sir. 38

*Ham.* Oh, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. [*Exeunt Players.*]

*Enter* POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord! will the King hear this piece of work? 48

*Pol.* And the Queen too, and that presently.

*Ham.* Bid the players make haste. [*Exit Polonius.*] Will you two help to hasten them?

*Ros.* }  
*Guil.* } We will, my lord.

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]*

*Ham.* What ho! Horatio.

*Enter* HORATIO.

*Hor.* Here, sweet lord, at your service.

*Ham.* Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man  
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

33. [nor Turk: this is taken from the quarto of 1603. A more usual reading is "nor man," for which the "or Norman" of the folios is probably a misprint. The sense would be, "nor even of man."]

56. conversation = personal intercourse. [coped = encountered.]

*Hor.* Oh, my dear lord, —

*Ham.* Nay, do not think I flatter ;  
For what advancement may I hope from thee  
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,  
To feed and clothe thee ? Why should the poor be  
flatter'd ? ■

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear ?  
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice  
And could of men distinguish, her election  
Hath seal'd thee for herself ; for thou hast been  
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,  
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks : and blest are those  
Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled,  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger 71  
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart ;  
As I do thee. — Something too much of this. —  
There is a play to-night before the King ;  
One scene of it comes near the circumstance,  
Which I have told thee, of my father's death :  
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,  
Even with the very comment of thy soul 80  
Observe mine uncle : if his occulted guilt  
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,  
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,  
And my imaginations are as foul  
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note ;  
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,

59. [revenue: accent on second syllable.]

62. [pregnant= either ready, or productive (of gain).]

And after we will both our judgements join  
In censure of his seeming.

*Hor.*

Well, my lord :

If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,  
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

90

*Ham.* They are coming to the play ; I must be  
idle :

Get you a place.

*Danish march. A flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others.*

*King.* How fares our cousin Hamlet ?

*Ham.* Excellent, i' faith ; of the chameleon's dish :  
I eat the air, promise-cramm'd : you cannot feed  
capons so.

*King.* I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet ;  
these words are not mine.

*Ham.* No, nor mine now. [*To Polonius.*] My  
lord, you played once i' th' university, you say ?

100

*Pol.* That did I, my lord ; and was accounted a  
good actor.

*Ham.* What did you enact ?

*Pol.* I did enact Julius Cæsar : I was kill'd i' th'  
Capitol ; Brutus kill'd me.

*Ham.* It was a brute part of him to kill so capital  
a calf there. Be the players ready ?

*Ros.* Ay, my lord ; they stay upon your patience.

*Queen.* Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

*Ham.* No, good mother, here 's metal more attrac-  
tive.

110

[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*]

*Pol.* [*To the King.*] Oh, ho ! do you mark that ?

*Oph.* You are merry, my lord.

91. be idle = seem without serious purpose [possibly even  
" foolish "].

*Ham.* Who, I?

*Oph.* Ay, my lord.

*Ham.* O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within 's two hours.

*Oph.* Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord. 119

*Ham.* So long? Nay then, let the Devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet! Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by 'r lady, he must build churches, then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is "For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot."

*Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters.*

*Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in another man, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts; she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love. [Exeunt.]*

*Oph.* What means this, my lord?

115. [your only jig-maker: "A jig was not, in Shakespeare's time, only a dance, but a ludicrous dialogue of the lowest kind." Steevens. your is used ethically. The general meaning is, "I am the best of jig-makers."]

117. within 's= within these.

121. for I'll have a suit of sables: Hamlet drily and jocosely disappoints expectation, and declares in other phrase that he will do just as the Devil does.

125. the hobby-horse was a figure (played by a man) in the morris dances.

*Ham.* Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief. 130

*Oph.* Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

*Enter Prologue.*

*Ham.* We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all.

*Oph.* Will he tell us what this show meant?

*Ham.* Ay, or any show that you'll show him: be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

*Oph.* You are naught, you are naught: I'll mark the play. 140

*Pro.* For us, and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently.

[*Exit.*]

*Ham.* Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

*Oph.* 'T is brief, my lord.

*Ham.* As woman's love.

*Enter two Players, King and Queen.*

*P. King.* Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground,  
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen  
About the world have times twelve thirties been, 150  
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands  
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

129. *miching mallecho*: a grotesque phrase made up of English and Spanish = secret mischief.

144. [*posy* = *poesy*; the rhymed motto engraved in a ring.]

147. *Full thirty times*, etc. Some editors have actually searched this play within the play for the twelve or sixteen lines that Hamlet speaks of introducing! There could be no vainer quest. Hamlet's declaration, it should not need to be said, is merely to prepare us for his finding a play exactly suited to his purposes; and this Shakespeare wrote *en bloc*.

*P. Queen.* So many journeys may the sun and moon  
Make us again count o'er ere love be done !

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,  
So far from cheer and from your former state,  
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must :  
For women's fear and love holds quantity ;  
In neither aught, or in extremity.

160

Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know :  
And as my love is sized, my fear is so :  
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear ;  
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

*P. King.* 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too ;  
My operant powers their functions leave to do :  
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,  
Honor'd, beloved ; and haply one as kind  
For husband shalt thou —

*P. Queen.* Oh, confound the rest !  
Such love must needs be treason in my breast !  
In second husband let me be accurst !  
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

170

*Ham.* [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood.

*P. Queen.* The instances that second marriage move  
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love :  
A second time I kill my husband dead,  
When second husband kisses me in bed.

*P. King.* I do believe you think what now you speak ;  
But what we do determine oft we break.  
Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
Of violent birth, but poor validity ;  
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree ;  
But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be.  
Most necessary 't is that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt :  
What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

180



The violence of either grief or joy  
 Their own enactures with themselves destroy :  
 Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament ; 190  
 Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.  
 This world is not for aye, nor 't is not strange  
 That even our loves should with our fortunes change ;  
 For 't is a question left us yet to prove,  
 Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.  
 The great man down, you mark his favourites flies ;  
 The poor advanced makes friends of enemies.  
 And hitherto doth love on fortune tend ;  
 For who not needs shall never lack a friend,  
 And who in want a hollow friend doth try, 200  
 Directly seasons him his enemy.  
 But, orderly to end where I begun,  
 Our wills and fates do so contrary run  
 That our devices still are overthrown :  
 Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own :  
 So think thou wilt no second husband wed :  
 But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

*P. Queen.* Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light !  
 Sport and repose lock from me day and night !  
 To desperation turn my trust and hope ! 210  
 An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope !  
 Each opposite that blanks the face of joy  
 Meet what I would have well and it destroy !  
 Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,  
 If, once a widow, ever I be wife !

*Ham.* If she should break it now !

196. *his favourites flies.* This has been commonly changed to "favourite flies," much to the detriment of the descriptiveness of the passage. But here "flies" is not an instance of the old "third person plural in s." If it were not for the rhyme, the reading should be, and would rightly have been, "favourites fly."

211. [*anchor* = *anchorite*.]

*P. King.* 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile;

My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile  
The tedious day with sleep.

[*Sleeps.*]

*P. Queen.* Sleep rock thy brain ;  
And never come mischance between us twain !

[*Exit.*]

*Ham.* Madam, how like you this play ?

221

*Queen.* The lady protests too much, methinks.

*Ham.* Oh, but she'll keep her word.

*King.* Have you heard the argument ? Is there  
no offence in 't ?

*Ham.* No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest ; no  
offence i' th' world.

*King.* What do you call the play ?

*Ham.* The Mouse-trap. Marry, how ? Tropically.  
This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna.  
Gonzago is the duke's name ; his wife, Baptista : you  
shall see anon : 't is a knavish piece of work : but  
what o' that ? your majesty and we that have free  
souls, it touches us not : let the gall'd jade wince, our  
withers are unwrung.

*Enter LUCIANUS.*

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

*Oph.* You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

*Ham.* I could interpret between you and your love,  
if I could see the puppets dallying.

*Oph.* You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

240

*Ham.* Begin, murderer : leave thy damnable faces,

229. Tropically = by trope, figure of speech.

230. [murder: Mr. White has chosen to retain the inconsistencies of the first folio, in the varying form of this word.]

231. his wife, Baptista. This name is borne by men in Italy, but it had a feminine ending which misled Shakespeare.

238. interpret: puppet shows had an interpreter or chorus.

and begin. Come : “ the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.”

*Luc.* Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing ;

Confederate season, else no creature seeing ;

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,

With Hecate’s ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,

Thy natural magic and dire property,

On wholesome life usurp immediately.

249

*[Pours the poison into the sleeper’s ears.]*

*Ham.* He poisons him i’ th’ garden for ’s estate.  
His name’s Gonzago : the story is extant, and writ in  
choice Italian : you shall see anon how the murtherer  
gets the love of Gonzago’s wife.

*Oph.* The King rises.

*Ham.* What, frightened with false fire ?

*Queen.* How fares my lord ?

*Pol.* Give o’er the play.

*King.* Give me some light : away !

*All.* Lights, lights, lights !

*[Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.]*

*Ham.* Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

260

The hart ungalled play ;

For some must watch, while some must sleep :

So runs the world away.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers — if the  
rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me — with two  
Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellow-  
ship in a cry of players, sir ?

*Hor.* Half a share.

266. Provincial = Provençal. [*roses* = rosettes. *razed* = pinked or slashed.]

268. half a share. The fellows in a cry, or company, of players were paid by shares in the profits of the performances.

*Ham.* A whole one, ay.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,

270

This realm dismantled was

Of Jove himself ; and now reigns here

A very, very — pajock.

*Hor.* You might have rhymed.

*Ham.* O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word  
for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

*Hor.* Very well, my lord.

*Ham.* Upon the talk of the poisoning?

*Hor.* I did very well note him.

*Ham.* Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the re-  
corders!

281

For if the king like not the comedy,

Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.

Come, some music!

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

*Guil.* Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

*Ham.* Sir, a whole history.

*Guil.* The King, sir, —

*Ham.* Ay, sir, what of him?

*Guil.* Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

*Ham.* With drink, sir?

290

*Guil.* No, my lord, rather with choler.

*Ham.* Your wisdom should show itself more richer  
to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him

269. [A whole one, ay : Malone's emendation for the "I" of the old copies, which would mean "I deserve a whole one, I do."]

273. *pajock* = peacock: pronounced *payoc*. [Irving here makes a bold point with Ophelia's peacock-feather fan, of which he has possessed himself, idly, soon after her entrance. He now flings it wildly from him, "as if it had suggested a word and was done with."]

283. *perdy* = *par Dieu*. (French.)

to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

*Guil.* Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

*Ham.* I am tame, sir : pronounce.

*Guil.* The Queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you. 300

*Ham.* You are welcome.

*Guil.* Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment : if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

*Ham.* Sir, I cannot.

*Guil.* What, my lord ?

*Ham.* Make you a wholesome answer ; my wit's diseased : but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command ; or, rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the matter : my mother, you say, —

*Ros.* Then thus she says ; your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

*Ham.* O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother ! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration ? Impart.

*Ros.* She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed. 320

*Ham.* We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us ?

*Ros.* My lord, you once did love me.

*Ham.* So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

*Ros.* Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper ? you do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

*Ham.* Sir, I lack advancement.

*Ros.* How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?

*Ham.* Ay, but sir, "While the grass grows," — the proverb is something musty.

*Re-enter Players with recorders.*

Oh, the recorders! let me see one. To withdraw with you:—why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

*Guil.* Oh, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

*Ham.* I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

*Guil.* My lord, I cannot. 340

*Ham.* I pray you.

*Guil.* Believe me, I cannot.

*Ham.* I do beseech you.

*Guil.* I know no touch of it, my lord.

*Ham.* 'T is as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most excellent music. Look you, these are the stops.

*Guil.* But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill. 350

*Ham.* Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from

331. [The proverb seems to have been, "While the grass grows, the steed starves."]

333. *recorders*: these were wind instruments, like large flageolets; they were of various sizes. **To withdraw with you**=a word aside with you.

347. *excellent music*: The quarto of 1604, commonly followed, has *eloquent*, etc., — a poor epithet for music.

my lowest note to the top of my compass ; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe ? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.

360

*Enter* POLONIUS.

God bless you, sir.

*Pol.* My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.

*Ham.* Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel ?

*Pol.* By th' mass, and it's like a camel, indeed.

*Ham.* Methinks it is like a weasel.

*Pol.* It is back'd like a weasel.

*Ham.* Or like a whale ?

*Pol.* Very like a whale.

370

*Ham.* Then I will come to my mother by and by.

[*Aside.*] They fool me to the top of my bent. — I will come by and by.

*Pol.* I will say so.

*Ham.* By and by is easily said. [*Exit Polonius.*]

Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

'T is now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world : now could I drink hot  
blood,

357. 'Sblood: The full significance of this oath was lost even in Shakespeare's day.

359. fret: frets are pieces of metal on the neck of a viol or guitar which stop the vibration of the string, and so make the various notes of the scale. [Hence the verb fret would mean stop ; but the more obvious meaning is also intended.]

372. [to the top of my bent—to the utmost degree possible; a metaphor taken from the bending of a bow.]

And do such bitter business as the day  
 Would quake to look on. Soft ! now to my mother.  
 O heart, lose not thy nature ; let not ever  
 The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom :  
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural :  
 I will speak daggers to her, but use none ;  
 My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites ;  
 How in my words soever she be shent,  
 To give them seals never, my soul, consent !

[Exit.

SCENE III. *A room in the castle.**Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
 To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you ;  
 I your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
 And he to England shall along with you ;  
 The terms of our estate may not endure  
 Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow  
 Out of his lunacies.

*Guil.* We will ourselves provide :  
 Most holy and religious fear it is  
 To keep those many many bodies safe  
 That live and feed upon your majesty.

*Ros.* The single and peculiar life is bound,  
 With all the strength and armour of the mind,  
 To keep itself from noyance ; but much more  
 That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest  
 The lives of many. The cease of majesty  
 Dies not alone ; but, like a gulf, doth draw  
 What 's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,  
 Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,

387. *shent*=harshly reprov'd.11. *single and peculiar life*=that of a private person.



To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls, 20  
 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone  
 Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

*King.* Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage :  
 For we will fetters put upon this fear,  
 Which now goes too free-footed.

*Ros.* }  
*Guil.* } We will haste us.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]

*Enter* POLONIUS.

*Pol.* My lord, he's going to his mother's closet :  
 Behind the arras I'll convey myself,  
 To hear the process; I'll warrant she'll tax him  
 home :

And as you said, and wisely was it said, 30  
 'T is meet that some more audience than a mother,  
 Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear  
 The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege :  
 I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,  
 And tell you what I know.

*King.* Thanks, dear my lord.

[*Exit Polonius.*]

Oh, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven ;  
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,  
 A brother's murther. Pray can I not,  
 Though inclination be as sharp as will :  
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent ; 40  
 And, like a man to double business bound,  
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,

29. tax him home=reproach him thoroughly; in homely phrase, scold him well.

33. [of vantage=from a position of advantage.]

And both neglect. What if this cursed hand  
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy  
 But to confront the visage of offence?  
 And what 's in prayer but this two-fold force,  
 To be forestalled ere we come to fall,  
 Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up; 50  
 My fault is past. But, oh, what form of prayer  
 Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murther?"  
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd  
 Of those effects for which I did the murther,  
 My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.  
 May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?  
 In the corrupted currents of this world  
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
 And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself  
 Buys out the law: but 't is not so above; 60  
 There is no shuffling, there the action lies  
 In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
 To give in evidence. What then? what rests?  
 Try what repentance can: what can it not?  
 Yet what can it when one can not repent?  
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
 O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,  
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!  
 Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of  
 steel, 70

68. *limed* = caught as with bird-lime.

69. [*Make assay!* This may, like "bow" and "be soft," be addressed to his own powers; and in that case it has the force of "try;" compare l. 65. But it may be a call to the angels, meaning "Make a charge to the rescue!" Spenser frequently uses *assay*, both as verb and as noun, in the sense of "assail" and "assault." See, also, Act II., sc. ii., l. 71.]

Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe !

All may be well.

[Retires and kneels.

Enter HAMLET.

*Ham.* Now might I do it pat, now he is praying ;

And now I 'll do 't. — And so he goes to heaven ;

And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd :

A villain kills my father ; and for that,

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven.

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

He took my father grossly, full of bread ;

80

With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May ;

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven ?

But in our circumstance and course of thought,

'T is heavy with him : and am I then revenged,

To take him in the purging of his soul,

When he is fit and season'd for his passage ?

No !

Up, sword ; and know thou a more horrid hent :

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed ;

90

At gaming, swearing, or about some act

That has no relish of salvation in 't ;

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,

And that his soul may be as damn'd and black

As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays :

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

[Exit.

88. a more horrid hent=a having, or opportunity [or possibly grasp], of a more horrid sort. It has been objected by some, who vainly assume that Hamlet was meant for a perfect and altogether admirable man, that this speech is unworthy of him. But it has no quality about it of good or bad in relation to malignancy. It is merely a procrastinating fetch of Hamlet's, a subtle manifestation of his intellectual paltering.

*King.* [*Rising.*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below :

Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *The QUEEN's closet.*

*Enter QUEEN and POLONIUS.*

*Pol.* He will come straight. Look you lay home to him :

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,  
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between  
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.

Pray you, be round with him.

*Ham.* [*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother!

*Queen.* I'll warrant you,  
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

[*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

*Enter HAMLET.*

*Ham.* Now, mother, what's the matter?

*Queen.* Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

*Ham.* Mother, you have my father much offended.

*Queen.* Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue. 11

*Ham.* Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

*Queen.* Why, how now, Hamlet!

*Ham.* What's the matter now?

*Queen.* Have you forgot me?

*Ham.* No, by the rood, not so :  
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife ;  
And — would it were not so ! — you are my mother.

4. [*sconce me*: Hanmer's reading; for "insconce." But both quartos and folios read *silence me*.]

11. *idle tongue*=a vain, frivolous tongue. See sc. ii., l. 91.

Queen. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you. 20

Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

Pol. [*Behind.*] What, ho! help, help, help!

Ham. [*Drawing.*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [*Makes a pass through the arras.*]

Pol. [*Behind.*] Oh, I am slain! [*Falls and dies.*]

Queen. O me, what hast thou done?

Ham. Nay, I know not:

Is it the King?

Queen. Oh, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Ham. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother, As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen. As kill a king!

Ham. Ay, lady, 't was my word. 30

[*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius.*]

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy betters: take thy fortune;

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

[*Drops the arras.*]

Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,

And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff,

If damned custom have not brass'd it so

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

Queen. What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue

23. [for a ducat: a form of wager. "I will stake a ducat that he is dead."]

In noise so rude against me?

*Ham.*

Such an act

40

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,  
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love  
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows  
As false as dicers' oaths : oh, such a deed  
As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words : heaven's face doth glow ;  
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,  
With tristful visage, as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act.

50

*Queen.*

Ay me, what act,

That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

*Ham.* Look here, upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See, what a grace was seated on this brow ;  
Hyperion's curls ; the front of Jove himself ;  
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command ;  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill ;  
A combination and a form indeed,  
Where every god did seem to set his seal,  
To give the world assurance of a man :  
This was your husband. Look you now, what fol-  
lows :

60

Here is your husband ; like a mildew'd ear,  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes ?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

46. *contraction* = the marriage contract.

52. *index*. The indexes of books used to be printed in the beginning instead of the end. [It is possible that *index* here means "indication, pointing out."]

And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?  
 You cannot call it love; for at your age  
 The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
 And waits upon the judgement: and what judgement 70  
 Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,  
 Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense  
 Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,  
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd  
 But it reserved some quantity of choice,  
 To serve in such a difference. What devil was 't  
 That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?  
 Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
 Could not so mope. 80  
 O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
 If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
 And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame  
 When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn  
 And reason panders will.

*Queen.*

O Hamlet, speak no more:

67. *batten*=feed fat.

69. [*The hey-day in the blood*: reckless revelry, as on a high-day (feast-day); so Byron in *Don Juan*: "While youth's hot wishes in our red veins revel."]

71-72. [*Sense . . . motion*: Staunton explains this, "the sensibility to appreciate the distinction between external objects you must have, or you would no longer feel the impulse of desire," and sustains his interpretation of *motion* by citing *Measure for Measure*, I., v., 59, and *Othello*, I., iii., 334.]

77. [*hoodman-blind*=blind man's buff.]

81. [*mope*=be stupid.]

82. *Rebellious hell*. Perhaps we should read, "rebellious heat." The misprint is easy.

Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul ;  
 And there I see such black and grained spots  
 As will not leave their tinct.  
 These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears ;  
 No more, sweet Hamlet !

90

*Ham.* A murderer and a villain ;  
 A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe  
 Of your precedent lord ; a vice of kings ;  
 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,  
 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,  
 And put it in his pocket !

*Queen.* No more !

*Ham.* A king of shreds and patches ! —

*Enter Ghost.*

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,  
 You heavenly guards ! What would your gracious  
 figure ?

100

*Queen.* Alas, he 's mad !

*Ham.* Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
 That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by  
 The important acting of your dread command ?  
 Oh, say !

*Ghost.* Do not forget : this visitation  
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.

90. *grained spots*=dyed in the grain, so that they will not wash out.

95. *a vice of kings*=a king like the Vice in the old Moralities.

*Enter Ghost.* The quarto of 1603, recording what the spectator saw, has *Enter Ghost in his night gown*, that is, in his dressing gown. Hamlet sees his father in his customary dress in his private apartments, as he says afterwards "in his habit as he lived."

104. *lapsed in time and passion*=given up to delay and emotion.



But, look, amazement on thy mother sits :  
Oh, step between her and her fighting soul : 110  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works :  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

*Ham.* How is it with you, lady ?

*Queen.* Alas, how is 't with you,  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy  
And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse ?  
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep ;  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,  
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrements,  
Start up, and stand an end. O gentle son,  
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper 120  
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look ?

*Ham.* On him, on him ! Look you, how pale he  
glares !

His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,  
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me ;  
Lest with this piteous action you convert  
My stern effects : then what I have to do  
Will want true colour ; tears perchance for blood.

*Queen.* To whom do you speak this ?

*Ham.* Do you see nothing there ?

*Queen.* Nothing at all ; yet all that is I see.

*Ham.* Nor did you nothing hear ?

*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves.

*Ham.* Why, look you there ! look, how it steals  
away ! 131

My father, in his habit as he lived !

Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal !

[*Exit Ghost.*]

111. [*conceit* = imagination.]

125. *convert my stern effects* = change my stern purpose,  
—another nascent excuse for flinching and procrastination.  
[Shakespeare may have written *affects* ; see note on III., i., 166.]

*Queen.* This is the very coinage of your brain :  
This bodiless creation ecstasy  
Is very cunning in.

*Ham.* Ecstasy !

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music : it is not madness  
That I have utter'd : bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will re-word ; which madness 146  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,  
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,  
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks :  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven ;  
Repent what's past ; avoid what is to come ;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,  
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue ;  
For in the fatness of these pursy times 150  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,  
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in  
twain.

*Ham.* Oh, throw away the worser part of it,  
And live the purer with the other half.  
Good night : but go not to mine uncle's bed ;  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.  
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,

135. *ecstasy* = madness. [See l. 74.]

152. [*curb* = bend ; from French *courber*.]

159. *Of habits evil* : that is, that monster, custom, who by mere repetition destroys (eats) all consciousness of evil in what is habitual, is also an angel because he gives in like manner, by habit, the livery, or sign of service, to good, etc. [This passage is omitted in the folios. The quartos have *Of habits devil*. The present reading is Pope's.]

That to the use of actions fair and good 160  
 He likewise gives a frock or livery,  
 That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,  
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
 To the next abstinence : the next more easy ;  
 For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
 And either tame the devil or throw him out,  
 With wondrous potency. Once more, good night :  
 And when you are desirous to be bless'd,  
 I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,

*[Pointing to Polonius.]*

I do repent : but heaven hath pleased it so, 170  
 To punish me with this and this with me,  
 That I must be their scourge and minister.  
 I will bestow him, and will answer well  
 The death I gave him. So, again, good night.  
 I must be cruel, only to be kind :  
 Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.  
 One word more, good lady.

*Queen.*

What shall I do ?

*Ham.* Not this, by no means, that I bid you do :  
 Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed ;  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out, 180  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft. 'T were good you let him know ;  
 For who, that 's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
 Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,

166. **And either** : after these words a monosyllable has been lost in the old copies. It might have been "tame," or (as Malone reads) "curb," if that word did not occur a few lines above [intransitively], but I feel sure not "quell," as Singer reads : that is too strong. To *tame* the devil is to *change* the stamp of nature.

184. **paddock**=toad. [**gib**=male cat; a contraction of Gilbert.]

Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?  
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,  
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,  
 Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep,  
 And break your own neck down.

190

*Queen.* Be thou assured, if words be made of  
 breath,  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
 What thou hast said to me.

*Ham.* I must to England; you know that?

*Queen.* Alack,  
 I had forgot: 't is so concluded on.

*Ham.* There 's letters seal'd: and my two school-  
 fellows,  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,  
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;  
 For 't is the sport to have the enginer  
 Hoist with his own petar: and 't shall go hard  
 But I will delve one yard below their mines,  
 And blow them at the moon: oh, 't is most sweet,  
 When in one line two crafts directly meet.  
 [This man shall set me packing:

200

187. **Unpeg the basket:** there is reference here to a manifestly well-known story in which an ape let birds out of a wicker cage on a housetop, got in himself, and, being too heavy, broke the basket away and fell. But no such story has been discovered.

205. **This man, etc.** I am very sure that this speech according to Shakespeare ended thus:—

O, 't is most sweet,  
 When in one line two crafts directly meet.  
 Mother, good night,

with a rhyming tag and a final good night, and that the words enclosed thus [ ] are either from the old play, or were added

I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.]  
Mother, good night. [Indeed this counsellor  
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,  
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.  
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.  
Good night, mother.]

210

[*Exeunt severally: Hamlet dragging in Polonius.*]

## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *A room in the castle.*

*Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* There's matter in these sighs; these profound heaves

You must translate: 't is fit we understand them.

Where is your son?

*Queen.* Bestow this place on us a little while.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!

*King.* What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

*Queen.* Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend

Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,

Behind the arras hearing something stir,

Whips out his rapier, cries, "A rat, a rat!"

10

by another and an inferior writer. But I cannot presume to omit them, because, while the previous lines of the speech are found only in the quarto of 1604, these lines (205 to the end) not only appear both in the folio and the quarto of 1604, but in a mutilated form in the quarto of 1603. They were retained, it should seem, from the old play, or supplied to the stage, for their application to Hamlet's ugly "job" of dragging out the body of his victim, made necessary by the lack of shifting scenery on our early stage.

And, in his brainish apprehension, kills  
The unseen good old man.

*King.*

O heavy deed!

It had been so with us, had we been there;  
His liberty is full of threats to all;  
To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,  
This mad young man: but so much was our love,  
We would not understand what was most fit;  
But, like the owner of a foul disease,  
To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

20

*Queen.* To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:  
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore  
Among a mineral of metals base,  
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

*King.* O Gertrude, come away!

The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,  
But we will ship him hence; and this vile deed  
We must, with all our majesty and skill,  
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

30

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:  
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body  
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]*

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;

18. [out of haunt = out of company.]

25, 26. ore among a mineral of metals = gold among ore of inferior metals.

And let them know, both what we mean to do,  
 And what 's untimely done : [so, haply, slander] 40  
 Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,  
 As level as the cannon to his blank,  
 Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name,  
 And hit the woundless air. Oh, come away !  
 My soul is full of discord and dismay. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *Another room in the castle.*

*Enter HAMLET.*

*Ham.* Safely stowed.

*Ros.* } [ *Within.* ] Hamlet ! Lord Hamlet !  
*Guil.* }

*Ham.* What noise ? who calls on Hamlet ? Oh,  
 here they come.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

*Ros.* What have you done, my lord, with the dead  
 body ?

*Ham.* Compounded it with dust, whereto 't is kin.

*Ros.* Tell us where 't is, that we may take it  
 thence

And bear it to the chapel.

*Ham.* Do not believe it.

*Ros.* Believe what ? 10

*Ham.* That I can keep your counsel and not mine  
 own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what  
 replication should be made by the son of a king ?

*Ros.* Take you me for a sponge, my lord ?

*Ham.* Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's counte-

40. so, haply, slander: these words supply, by the happy  
 conjectures of Theobald and Capell, a part of this line which had  
 been lost.

42. [blank = "the white mark at which shot or arrows were  
 aimed." — Steevens.]

nance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape doth nuts, in the corner of his jaw; first mouth'd, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have glean'd, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again. 21

*Ros.* I understand you not, my lord.

*Ham.* I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

*Ros.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King.

*Ham.* The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing —

*Guil.* A thing, my lord!

*Ham.* Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III. *Another room in the castle.*

*Enter KING, attended.*

*King.* I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

Yet must not we put the strong law on him:

He's loved of the distracted multitude,

Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes:

And where 't is so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,

27. **The body is with the King, etc.** Hamlet keeps up his semblance of madness. [If there be any undercurrent of sane meaning, it is perhaps: "The body (*i. e.* the guilt of the murder) lies at the King's door; but, alas, the King is not with the body (is not also dead)." Compare Act III., sc. iv., lines 26 and 32.]

30. [**Hide fox, etc.** Evidently a cry in a game like hide-and-seek.]



But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,  
This sudden sending him away must seem  
Deliberate pause : diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are relieved 10  
Or not at all.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ.*

How now ! what hath befall'n ?

*Ros.* Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,  
We cannot get from him.

*King.* But where is he ?

*Ros.* Without, my lord ; guarded, to know your  
pleasure.

*King.* Bring him before us.

*Ros.* Ho, Guildenstern ! bring in my lord.

*Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius ?

*Ham.* At supper.

*King.* At supper ! where ? 19

*Ham.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten : a  
certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.  
Your worm is your only emperor for diet ; we fat all  
creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for mag-  
gots : your fat king and your lean beggar is but  
variable service, two dishes, but to one table : that 's  
the end.

*King.* Alas, alas !

*Ham.* A man may fish with the worm that hath  
eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that  
worm. 20

*King.* What dost thou mean by this ?

*Ham.* Nothing but to show you how a king may  
go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

*King.* Where is Polonius ?

*Ham.* In heaven ; send thither to see : if your

messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby. 39

*King.* Go seek him there. [To some Attendants.]

*Ham.* He will stay till ye come. [Exeunt Attendants.]

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety, —

Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve  
For that which thou hast done, — must send thee hence  
With fiery quickness : therefore prepare thyself ;  
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,  
The associates tend, and every thing is bent  
For England.

*Ham.* For England !

*King.* Ay, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Good.

*King.* So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes. 49

*Ham.* I see a cherub that sees them. But, come ;  
for England ! Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* Thy loving father, Hamlet.

*Ham.* My mother : father and mother is man and wife ; man and wife is one flesh ; and so, my mother.  
Come, for England ! [Exit.]

*King.* Follow him at foot ; tempt him with speed  
aboard ;

Delay it not ; I'll have him hence to-night :  
Away ! for every thing is seal'd and done  
That else leans on the affair : pray you, make haste.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught — 60  
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,  
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red  
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe

Pays homage to us — thou mayst not coldly set  
 Our sovereign process ; which imports at full,  
 By letters congruing to that effect,  
 The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England ;  
 For like the hectic in my blood he rages,  
 And thou must cure me : till I know 't is done,  
 Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [Exit.

SCENE IV. *A plain in Denmark.*

*Enter FORTINBRAS, a Captain, and Soldiers, marching.*

*For.* Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king !  
 Tell him that, by his license, Fortinbras  
 Craves the conveyance of a promised march  
 Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.  
 If that his majesty would aught with us,  
 We shall express our duty in his eye ;  
 And let him know so.

*Cap.* I will do 't, my lord.

*For.* Go softly on. [Exeunt Fortinbras and Soldiers.

*Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others.*

*Ham.* Good sir, whose powers are these ?

*Cap.* They are of Norway, sir. 10

*Ham.* How purposed, sir, I pray you ?

*Cap.* Against some part of Poland.

*Ham.* Who commands them, sir ?

*Cap.* The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

*Ham.* Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,

Or for some frontier ?

*Cap.* Truly to speak, and with no addition,  
 We go to gain a little patch of ground  
 That hath in it no profit but the name.

68. [the hectic = a fever.]

6. in his eye = in his presence.

17. [Capell inserted "sir" after speak.]

To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it; 20  
 Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
 A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

*Ham.* Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

*Cap.* Yes, 't is already garrison'd.

*Ham.* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand  
 ducats

Will not debate the question of this straw :  
 This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,  
 That inward breaks, and shows no cause without  
 Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir. 29

*Cap.* God b' wi' you, sir. [Exit.]

*Ros.* Will 't please you go, my lord ?

*Ham.* I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.

*[Exeunt all except Hamlet.]*

How all occasions do inform against me,  
 And spur my dull revenge ! What is a man,  
 If his chief good and market of his time  
 Be but to sleep and feed ? a beast, no more.  
 Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
 Looking before and after, gave us not  
 That capability and god-like reason  
 To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be  
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple 40  
 Of thinking too precisely on the event,  
 A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom  
 And ever three parts coward, I do not know  
 Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do ;"  
 Sith I have cause and will and strength and means  
 To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me :

27. **imposthume**=an internal swelling.

34. **market**=business [or profit].

36. [**discourse**: see note on Act I., sc. ii., l. 150.]

39. **fust**=mould, grow stale.

Witness this army of such mass and charge  
 Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
 Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd  
 Makes mouths at the invisible event, 50  
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
 To all that fortune, death and danger dare,  
 Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great  
 Is not to stir without great argument,  
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
 When honour 's at the stake. How stand I then,  
 That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
 Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
 And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see  
 The imminent death of twenty thousand men, 60  
 That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,  
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
 Which is not tomb enough and continent  
 To hide the slain? Oh, from this time forth,  
 My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! [Exit.]

SCENE V. *Elsinore. A room in the castle.*

*Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, and a Gentleman.*

*Queen.* I will not speak with her.

*Hor.* She is importunate, indeed distract:  
 Her mood will needs be pitied.

54. [Is not to stir=Dr. Furness suggests a comma after not. How would that affect the sense?]

64. continent=containing place.

[Enter Queen, etc. The folios omit the Gentleman altogether, and give lines 14 and 15, as well as 16, to the Queen, to whom 16 manifestly belongs. The quartos give the Gentleman Horatio's speeches as far as l. 14, and give lines 14-16 to Horatio. There are no directions in the old copies for the exit or

*Queen.*

What would she have?

*Hor.* She speaks much of her father; says she  
hears

There's tricks i' th' world; and hems, and beats her  
heart;

Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,  
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,

Yet the unshaped use of it doth move

The hearers to collection: they aim at it;

And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts; 10  
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield  
them,

Indeed would make one think there might be thought,  
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

'T were good she were spoken with; for she may  
strew

Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

*Queen.* Let her come in.

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

[*Aside.*] To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,

Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:

So full of artless jealousy is guilt,

It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

20

the reentrance of either. Dr. Johnson, who dispensed with the Gentleman, sent Horatio out after l. 16, and assigned to him the duty of bringing in Ophelia; an arrangement praised by Clarke as "exquisitely appropriate." Mr. White seems to have retained the Gentleman only that he may go out after l. 16, leaving Horatio, who must be present when l. 58 is spoken. The necessity of a reentrance being thus done away with, Ophelia may enter more impressively alone, in accordance with the old copies.]

6. *enviously* = maliciously, mischievously.

9. *to collection* = to gathering up the meaning.

18. [*amiss* = a going amiss, mishap.]

19. [*jealousy* = suspicion.]

*Enter OPHELIA.**Oph.* Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?*Queen.* How now, Ophelia!

*Oph.* [*Sings.*] How should I your true love know  
 From another one?  
 By his cockle hat and staff,  
 And his sandal shoon.

*Queen.* Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?*Oph.* Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[*Sings.*] He is dead and gone, lady,  
 He is dead and gone;  
 At his head a grass-green turf,  
 At his heels a stone.

30

Oh, ho!

*Queen.* Nay, but, Ophelia, —*Oph.* Pray you, mark.[*Sings.*] White his shroud as the mountain snow, —*Enter KING.**Queen.* Alas, look here, my lord.

*Oph.* [*Sings.*] Larded with sweet flowers;  
 Which bewept to the grave did go  
 With true-love showers.

40

*King.* How do you, pretty lady?*Oph.* Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was  
a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are,

*Enter Ophelia.* Thus the quarto of 1604; the folio, *Enter Ophelia distracted*; the quarto of 1603, *Enter Ophelia playing on a lute, and her hair down, singing.*

26. *shoon* = shoes. The cockle hat (hat with a cockle shell on it) and the sandal shoon were signs of pilgrimage, and were often assumed as disguises by lovers.

42. [*God 'ild you* = God yield or reward you; a form of thanks.]

43. *a baker's daughter*: referring to an old legend that a

but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

*King.* Conceit upon her father.

*Oph.* Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

[*Sings.*] To-morrow is St. Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.

50

*King.* How long hath she been thus?

*Oph.* I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' th' cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.*]

*King.* Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. [*Exit Horatio.*]

Oh, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs  
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions. First, her father slain:  
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author  
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,  
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whis-  
pers,

For good Polonius' death; and we have done but  
greenly,

In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia  
Divided from herself and her fair judgement,  
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:  
baker's daughter grudged Christ some bread, and cried Heugh!  
heugh! at him, for which offence she was turned into an owl.

68. hugger-mugger = secrecy and haste.



Last, and as much containing as all these,  
 Her brother is in secret come from France ;  
 Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,  
 And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
 With pestilent speeches of his father's death ;  
 Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,  
 Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
 In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,  
 Like to a murdering-piece, in many places 79  
 Gives me superfluous death. [A noise within.]

*Queen.* Alack, what noise is this ?

*King.* Where are my Switzers ? Let them guard  
 the door.

*Enter a Gentleman.*

What is the matter ?

*Gent.* Save yourself, my lord :

The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
 Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste  
 Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,  
 O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord ;  
 And, as the world were now but to begin,  
 Antiquity forgot, custom not known,  
 (The ratifiers and props of every work,)  
 They cry " Choose we : Laertes shall be king : " 90

79. **murdering-piece**=a kind of cannon which was loaded with many balls or other missiles.

81. **Switzers**: the Swiss for hundreds of years served as mercenary soldiers in various countries of Europe.

83. [**overpeering of**: "of" frequently follows a participle or verbal noun; compare Act III., sc. iv., l. 34. **list**=boundary.]

85. [**head**=armed force in rebellion; compare *1 Henry IV.*, Act I., sc. iii., l. 284, and *Macbeth*, Act IV., sc. i., l. 97.]

89. [**work**: Tyrwhitt's conjecture for the "word" of the old copies. Dr. Johnson substituted "weal" in the sense of "state."]

Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds :

“Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!”

*Queen.* How cheerfully on the false trail they cry !  
Oh, this is counter, you false Danish dogs !

*King.* The doors are broke. [Noise within.

*Enter LAERTES, armed ; Danes following.*

*Laer.* Where is this king ? Sirs, stand you all without.

*Danes.* No, let 's come in.

*Laer.* I pray you, give me leave.

*Danes.* We will, we will. [They retire without the door.

*Laer.* I thank you : keep the door. O thou vile king,

Give me my father !

*Queen.* Calmly, good Laertes. [Laying hold of him.

*Laer.* That drop of blood that 's calm proclaims  
me bastard, 101

Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot  
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brows  
Of my true mother.

*King.* What is the cause, Laertes,  
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like ?  
Let him go, Gertrude ; do not fear our person :  
There 's such divinity doth hedge a king,  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,  
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.  
Speak, man. 111

*Laer.* Where is my father ?

*King.* Dead.

*Queen.* But not by him.

*King.* Let him demand his fill.

94. counter: dogs hunt counter when they follow the scent backward instead of forward.

*Laer.* How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:  
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!  
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,  
That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged  
Most thoroughly for my father.

*King.* Who shall stay you?

*Laer.* My will, not all the world: 121  
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,  
They shall go far with little.

*King.* Good Laertes,  
If you desire to know the certainty  
Of your dear father's death, is 't writ in your revenge,  
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,  
Winner and loser?

*Laer.* None but his enemies.

*King.* Will you know them then?

*Laer.* To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my  
arms;  
And like the kind life-rend'ring pelican, 130  
Repast them with my blood.

*King.* Why, now you speak  
Like a good child and a true gentleman.  
That I am guiltless of your father's death,  
And am most sensibly in grief for it,  
It shall as level to your judgement pierce  
As day does to your eye.

*Danes.* [ *Within.* ] Let her come in.

126. [*swoopstake*: a confused metaphor from a game at cards. "Will you draw all together into one sweeping condemnation?" ]

130. [*pelican*: this allusion to the belief that the pelican fed its young with its own blood, is a characteristic bit of Euphuism.]

*Laer.* How now ! what noise is that ?

*Re-enter OPHELIA.*

O heat, dry up my brains ! tears seven times salt,  
 Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye !  
 By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight, 140  
 Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May !  
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia !  
 O heavens ! is 't possible, a young maid's wits  
 Should be as mortal as an old man's life ?  
 Nature is fine in love, and where 't is fine,  
 It sends some precious instance of itself  
 After the thing it loves.

*Oph.* [*Sings.*] They bore him barefaced on the bier ;  
 Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny ;  
 And in his grave rain'd many a tear : —

Fare you well, my dove ! 151

*Laer.* Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade  
 revenge,  
 It could not move thus.

*Oph.* [*Sings.*] You must sing a-down a-down,  
 An you call him a-down-a.

Oh, how the wheel becomes it ! It is the false stew-  
 ard, that stole his master's daughter.

145. *Nature is fine in love.* Somewhat obscure, but the sense unmistakable: *fine*=sensitive; *instance*=proof, example. Ophelia's sensitiveness of nature has caused her reason to follow her father.

154-155. [Most editors print these lines as prose. An excellent suggestion of Mr. John Taylor is quoted by the Cambridge Editors: "Ophelia instructs them, 'You must sing *a-down a-down*, and you' (speaking to another) 'call him *a-down-a*.'" *An* is *and* in the old copies.]

156. *the wheel*=perhaps the burthen of the song was called the wheel. The explanation is not quite satisfactory. [This burthen was apparently sung as a *round*, or catch (see note on

*Laer.* This nothing 's more than matter.

*Oph.* There 's rosemary, that 's for remembrance ;  
pray, love, remember : and there is pansies, that 's  
for thoughts. 161

*Laer.* A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

*Oph.* There 's fennel for you, and columbines :  
there's rue for you ; and here 's some for me : we may  
call it herb-grace o' Sundays : oh, you must wear  
your rue with a difference. There 's a daisy : I would  
give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my  
father died : they say he made a good end, —

[*Sings.*] For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy. 170

*Laer.* Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,  
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

*Oph.* [*Sings.*] And will he not come again ?  
And will he not come again ?  
No, no, he is dead :  
Go to thy death-bed :  
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,  
All flaxen was his poll :

154-155); which may furnish the connection with **wheel**. As the refrain is inappropriate to the preceding song, it may belong to a lost ballad of a "false steward."]

162. **document**=precept, that which instructs: the radical sense.

166. **herb-grace**: a common name for rue.

167. **a difference**: the figures, or charges, borne on the same coats of arms by various members of the same family, to distinguish them, are called differences. [The quartos read "you may wear," which better fits the preceding remark and the simple sense of **with a difference**. In the latter expression Dr. Skeat thinks that there is no heraldic allusion intended; and he refers for the play on *rue* and *ruth*, sorrow, to Richard II., Act III., sc. iv., lines 105, 106.]

He is gone, he is gone,

180

And we cast away moan:

God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God b' wi' ye. [Exit.

*Laer.* Do you see this, O God?

*King.* Laertes, I must commune with your grief,  
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,  
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,  
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me :  
If by direct or by collateral hand

190

They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,  
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,  
To you in satisfaction : but if not,  
Be you content to lend your patience to us,  
And we shall jointly labour with your soul  
To give it due content.

*Laer.* Let this be so ;  
His means of death, his obscure burial —  
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,  
No noble rite nor formal ostentation —  
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,  
That I must call 't in question.

200

*King.* So you shall ;  
And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.  
I pray you, go with me.

[Exeunt.

SCENE VI. *Another room in the castle.*

*Enter HORATIO and a Servant.*

*Hor.* What are they that would speak with me?

*Serv.* Sailors, sir : they say they have letters for you.

198. hatchment—a cloth with armorial bearings painted on it, used at funerals.

*Hor.* Let them come in.

[*Exit Servant.*]

I do not know from what part of the world  
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

*Enter Sailors.*

*First Sail.* God bless you, sir.

*Hor.* Let him bless thee too.

*First Sail.* He shall, sir, an 't please him. There's  
a letter for you, sir: it comes from the ambassador  
that was bound for England; if your name be Hora-  
tio, as I am let to know it is. 11

*Hor.* [*Reads.*] "Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked  
this, give these fellows some means to the King: they have let-  
ters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very  
warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow  
of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I  
boarded them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I  
alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like  
thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a  
good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent;  
and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly  
death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee  
dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter.  
These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz  
and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I  
have much to tell thee. Farewell.

"He that thou knowest thine,

HAMLET."

Come, I will make you way for these your letters;  
And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me  
To him from whom you brought them.

[*Exeunt.*]

19. they knew what they did = they "knew what they  
were about," that it would be a good thing for them to serve  
Hamlet.

23. [bore = "the calibre of a gun, or the capacity of the  
barrel. 'The matter would carry heavier words.'" Dr. John-  
son.]

SCENE VII. *Another room in the castle.**Enter KING and LAERTES.*

*King.* Now must your conscience my acquittance  
seal,

And you must put me in your heart for friend,  
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
That he which hath your noble father slain  
Pursued my life.

*Laer.* It well appears: but tell me  
Why you proceeded not against these feats,  
So crimeful and so capital in nature,  
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,  
You mainly were stirr'd up.

*King.* Oh, for two special reasons;  
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,  
But yet to me they are strong. The Queen his  
mother

11

Lives almost by his looks; and for myself —  
My virtue or my plague, be it either which —  
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,  
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,  
I could not but by her. The other motive,  
Why to a public count I might not go,  
Is the great love the general gender bear him;  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone, 20  
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,

15. [the star . . . his sphere: according to the old Ptolemaic system of astronomy, the heavenly bodies were fixed in successive transparent spheres, which were all carried round by the movement of the outermost sphere, called the *primum mobile*.]

18. [the general gender = the common people, the people in general. Compare Act II., sc. ii., l. 437. gender = race.]



Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
Would have reverted to my bow again,  
And not where I had aim'd them.

*Laer.* And so have I a noble father lost;  
A sister driven into desperate terms,  
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,  
Stood challenger on mount of all the age  
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

*King.* Break not your sleeps for that: you must  
not think

30

That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
That we can let our beard be shook with danger  
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more;  
I loved your father, and we love ourself;  
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine —

*Enter a Messenger.*

How now! what news?

*Mess.* Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:  
This to your majesty; this to the Queen.

*King.* From Hamlet! who brought them?

*Mess.* Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them  
not:

They were given me by Claudio; he received them 40  
Of him that brought them.

*King.* Laertes, you shall hear them.  
Leave us.

*[Exit Messenger.]*

*[Reads.]* "High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked  
on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your  
kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto,  
recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

HAMLET."

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?  
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

*Laer.* Know you the hand?

*King.* 'Tis Hamlet's character. "Naked!"  
And in a postscript here, he says "alone."  
Can you advise me? 51

*Laer.* I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;  
It warms the very sickness in my heart,  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
"Thus didest thou."

*King.* If it be so, Laertes —  
As how should it be so? how otherwise? —  
Will you be ruled by me?

*Laer.* Ay, my lord;  
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

*King.* To thine own peace. If he be now re-  
turn'd, 60

As checking at his voyage, and that he means  
No more to undertake it, I will work him  
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:  
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,  
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice  
And call it accident.

*Laer.* My lord, I will be ruled;  
The rather, if you could devise it so  
That I might be the organ.

*King.* It falls right.  
You have been talk'd of since your travel much, 70  
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality  
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts  
Did not together pluck such envy from him

61. *checking at*: when a hawk in pursuit of one bird turned aside and made a dash at another, she was said to check at it.

66. [*uncharge*=acquit of blame.] *the practice*=the plot.

As did that one, and that, in my regard,  
Of the unworthiest siege.

*Laer.* What part is that, my lord?

*King.* A very riband in the cap of youth,  
Yet needful too ; for youth no less becomes  
The light and careless livery that it wears  
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,  
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,  
Here was a gentleman of Normandy : — 81  
I've seen myself, and served against, the French,  
And they can well on horseback : but this gallant  
Had witchcraft in 't ; he grew unto his seat ;  
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,  
As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured  
With the brave beast : so far he topp'd my thought,  
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,  
Come short of what he did.

*Laer.* A Norman, was 't?

*King.* A Norman. 90

*Laer.* Upon my life, Lamont.

*King.* The very same.

*Laer.* I know him well : he is the brooch indeed  
And gem of all the nation.

*King.* He made confession of you,  
And gave you such a masterly report  
For art and exercise in your defence  
And for your rapier most especially,  
That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed,

75. *siege*=seat, degree, rank.

80. [*importing health*=“ denoting attention to health.”  
Malone.]

86. *incorpsed*=incorporated.]

91. [*Lamont*: the folios have Lamound; the quartos, Lamord.]

If one could match you; th' escrimers of their nation,

He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye, 100  
If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his  
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy  
That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.  
Now, out of this, —

*Laer.* What out of this, my lord?

*King.* Laertes, was your father dear to you?  
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
A face without a heart?

*Laer.* Why ask you this?

*King.* Not that I think you did not love your father;

But that I know love is begun by time; 110  
And that I see, in passages of proof,  
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.  
There lives within the very flame of love  
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it:  
And nothing is at a like goodness still;  
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,  
Dies in his own too much: that we would do,  
We should do when we would; for this "would"  
changes

And hath abatements and delays as many 120  
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;  
And then this "should" is like a spendthrift sigh,  
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' th'  
ulcer: —

99. *escrimers* = fencers (*escrimeurs*, French).

116. *plurisy*: misused for *plethora*.

121. *spendthrift sigh* = a sigh that wastes life, according to the old superstition.

Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,  
To show yourself your father's son in deed  
More than in words?

*Laer.* To cut his throat i' th' church.

*King.* No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;

Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,  
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.

Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence 130

And set a double varnish on the fame

The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together

And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,

Most generous and free from all contriving,

Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,

Or with a little shuffling, you may choose

A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice

Requite him for your father.

*Laer.* I will do 't.

And, for that purpose, I'll anoint my sword.

I bought an unction of a mountebank, 140

So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,

Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,

Collected from all simples that have virtue

Under the moon, can save the thing from death

That is but scratched withal: I'll touch my point

With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,

It may be death.

*King.* Let's further think of this;

Weigh what convenience both of time and means

May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,

And that our drift look through our bad performance,

137. unbated=without a button. pass of practice=a thrust in foul play.

'T were better not assay'd : therefore this project 151  
Should have a back or second, that might hold,  
If this should blast in proof. Soft ! let me see :  
We 'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings :  
I ha 't :

When in your motion you are hot and dry —  
As make your bouts more violent to that end —  
And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him  
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck, 160  
Our purpose may hold there.

*Enter QUEEN.*

How now, sweet queen !

*Queen.* One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow : your sister 's drown'd, Laertes.

*Laer.* Drown'd ! Oh, where ?

*Queen.* There is a willow grows aslant a brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream ;  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples  
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them :  
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds 171  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke ;  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide ;  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up :  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued

157. [*As*, used parenthetically, = For so.]

159. for the nonce = for the occasion, the once.

160. [*stuck* = stoccado, thrust.]

169. liberal = free-spoken.

Unto that element: but long it could not be  
 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, 180  
 Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
 To muddy death.

*Laer.* Alas, then, she is drown'd?

*Queen.* Drown'd, drown'd.

*Laer.* Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
 And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet  
 It is our trick; nature her custom holds,  
 Let shame say what it will; when these are gone,  
 The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:  
 I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,  
 But that this folly douts it. [Exit.

*King.* Let's follow, Gertrude:

How much I had to do to calm his rage! 191

Now fear I this will give it start again;

Therefore let's follow. [Exeunt.

## ACT V.

### SCENE I. *A churchyard.*

*Enter two Clowns, with spades and pickaxes.*

*First Clo.* Is she to be buried in Christian burial  
 that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

*Sec. Clo.* I tell thee she is; and therefore make  
 her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and  
 finds it Christian burial.

*First Clo.* How can that be, unless she drown'd  
 herself in her own defence?

*Sec. Clo.* Why, 't is found so.

188. [The woman will be out=there will be no more wo-  
 manish weakness left in my nature.]

190. douts=does out, extinguishes.

4. straight=straightway, directly.

*First Clo.* It must be "*se offendendo*:" it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drown'd herself wittingly. 13

*Sec. Clo.* Nay, but hear you, goodman delver, —

*First Clo.* Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes, — mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life. 21

*Sec. Clo.* But is this law?

*First Clo.* Ay, marry, is 't; crowner's quest law.

*Sec. Clo.* Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

*First Clo.* Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession. 32

*Sec. Clo.* Was he a gentleman?

*First Clo.* He was the first that ever bore arms.

*Sec. Clo.* Why, he had none.

*First Clo.* What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says

9. *offendendo*: the clown's blunder for *defendendo*, as argal is for *ergo*.

26. out o' Christian burial. The Christianity of Shakespeare's time prescribed that one who ended his own life should be buried without service, at cross roads, with a stake driven through his heart.

30. even Christian = fellow Christian.



“Adam digg’d:” could he dig without arms? I’ll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself — 40

*Sec. Clo.* Go to.

*First Clo.* What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

*Sec. Clo.* The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

*First Clo.* I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To’t again, come. 50

*Sec. Clo.* “Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?”

*First Clo.* Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

*Sec. Clo.* Marry, now I can tell.

*First Clo.* To’t.

*Sec. Clo.* Mass, I cannot tell.

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO, at a distance.*

*First Clo.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are ask’d this question next, say “a grave-maker:” the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor.

*[Exit Sec. Clown.]*

*[He digs, and sings.]*

41. [**Go to:** it is difficult to convey the meaning of this Elizabethan colloquialism, which ranges between “Oh, come, now!” and “Fie!”]

53. **unyoke**=stop work.

54. [**Marry** (by Mary) and **Mass** (by the Mass) had practically ceased to be oaths in Shakespeare’s time, and become harmless interjections.]

61. **Yaughan**. Probably the name of the keeper of a well-

In youth, when I did love, did love,  
 Methought it was very sweet,  
 | To contract, oh ! the time, for, ah ! my behove,  
 Oh, methought, there was nothing meet.

*Ham.* Has this fellow no feeling of his business,  
 that he sings at grave-making?

*Hor.* Custom hath made it in him a property of  
 easiness. 70

*Ham.* 'T is e'en so : the hand of little employment  
 hath the daintier sense.

*First Clo.* [*Sings.*]

But age, with his stealing steps,  
 Hath claw'd me in his clutch,  
 And hath shipped me intil the land,  
 As if I had never been such. [*Throws up a skull.*]

*Ham.* That skull had a tongue in it, and could  
 sing once : how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if  
 it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murther !  
 It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass  
 now o'er-reaches ; one that would circumvent God,  
 might it not ? 82

known ale-house near the Globe Theatre. It may have been  
 Yaughan, which is Welsh ; or that may be merely a spelling of  
 Johan. The matter is of small importance. [This local allu-  
 sion does not appear in the quartos, which read "get thee in."]

63. *In youth*, etc. The three stanzas sung by the clown are  
 from a song in Tottel's *Miscellany*, published in 1557. But he  
 garbles the text grievously. [Jennens, quoted by Dr. Furness,  
 notes that the "oh" and the "ah" form no part of the song,  
 but are "only the breath forced out by the strokes of the mat-  
 tock."]

75. *intil* = into.

78. [*jowls* = throws with a jerk ; doubly appropriate here be-  
 cause it suggests by its sound "the cheek-bone smiting against  
 the earth." — (Clarke.) *jowl*, noun, otherwise derived, = cheek.]

81. [*o'er-reaches* : the quarto reading ; the folios have, in

*Hor.* It might, my lord.

*Ham.* Or of a courtier; which could say "Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?" This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

*Hor.* Ay, my lord.

89

*Ham.* Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knock'd about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on 't.

*First Clo.* [*Sings.*]

A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,

For, and a shrouding sheet:

Oh, a pit of clay for to be made

99

For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another skull.*]

*Ham.* There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Humph! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no more effect, the suggestive though rather strained term "o'er-offices."]

94. *loggats*: a game in which small logs of wood, *loggats*, are thrown at a jack.

108. *the fine of his fines*=the end of his fines.

of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

*Hor.* Not a jot more, my lord.

*Ham.* Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

*Hor.* Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

*Ham.* They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave 's this, sirrah?

120

*First Clo.* Mine, sir.

[*Sings.*] Oh, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

*Ham.* I think it be thine, indeed; for thou liest in 't.

*First Clo.* You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

*Ham.* Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine: 't is for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

131

*First Clo.* 'T is a quick lie, sir; 't will away again, from me to you.

*Ham.* What man dost thou dig it for?

*First Clo.* For no man, sir.

*Ham.* What woman, then?

*First Clo.* For none, neither.

*Ham.* Who is to be buried in 't?

112. a pair of indentures: indentures, being in duplicate, one to be kept by each party, were both written on one sheet of parchment, which was then cut in two on an indented line, whence the name. The pair must of course fit exactly into each other on this line.

130. the quick = the living.

*First Clo.* One that was a woman, sir ; but, rest her soul, she 's dead. 140

*Ham.* How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?

*First Clo.* Of all the days i' th' year, I came to 't that day that our last king Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

*Ham.* How long is that since ? 150

*First Clo.* Cannot you tell that ? every fool can tell that : it was the very day that young Hamlet was born ; he that is mad, and sent into England.

*Ham.* Ay, marry, why was he sent into England ?

*First Clo.* Why, because he was mad : he shall recover his wits there ; or, if he do not, it 's no great matter there.

*Ham.* Why ?

*First Clo.* 'T will not be seen in him there ; there the men are as mad as he. 160

*Ham.* How came he mad ?

*First Clo.* Very strangely, they say.

*Ham.* How strangely ?

*First Clo.* Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

*Ham.* Upon what ground ?

*First Clo.* Why, here in Denmark : I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

141. [absolute = positive, precise and dogmatic.]

142. [by the card = according to rule, with precision.]

144. [picked = affectedly fine.]

146. [kibe = a chilblain, or tender spot on the heel.]

152. young Hamlet: compare Act I., sc. i., l. 170.

*Ham.* How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?  
169

*First Clo.* I' faith, he will last you some eight year or nine year : a tanner will last you nine year.

*Ham.* Why he more than another?

*First Clo.* Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while ; and your water is a sore decayer of your dead body. Here 's a skull now ; this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

*Ham.* Whose was it?

*First Clo.* A mad fellow's it was : whose do you think it was?  
180

*Ham.* Nay, I know not.

*First Clo.* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue ! a' pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, this same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

*Ham.* This?

*First Clo.* E'en that.

*Ham.* Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio : a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy : he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now, how abhorred my imagination is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft.

184. [This same skull, sir : This repetition occurs in the folios. Corson thinks it shows the Clown's "sense of his official importance as he turns the skull over in his hands."]

191. [how abhorred, etc.: the folio reading, which makes it necessary to understand abhorred as horrified, or imagination as, specifically, imagination of that circumstance. The quartos, except the first, read "how abhorred in my imagination it is," "it" doubtless referring to the past, when he was borne on Yorick's back.]

Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing. 200

*Hor.* What 's that, my lord?

*Ham.* Dost thou think Alexander look'd o' this fashion i' th' earth?

*Hor.* E'en so.

*Ham.* And smelt so? puh! [*Puts down the skull.*]

*Hor.* E'en so, my lord.

*Ham.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? 209

*Hor.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

*Ham.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:

Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,

Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw! 221

But soft! but soft! awhile: here comes the King.

*Enter Priests, etc., in procession; the Corpse of OPHELIA, LAERTES and Mourners following; KING, QUEEN, their trains, etc.*

The Queen, the courtiers: who is that they follow?

And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken

The corse they follow did with desperate hand  
Fordo it own life : 't was of some estate.

Couch we awhile, and mark. [Retiring with Horatio.]

*Laer.* What ceremony else?

*Ham.* That is Laertes,

A very noble youth : mark.

*Laer.* What ceremony else? 230

*First Priest.* Her obsequies have been as far enlarged

As we have warrantise : her death was doubtful ;  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,  
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged  
Till the last trumpet ; for charitable prayers,  
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her :  
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin rites,  
Her maiden strewments and the bringing home  
Of bell and burial.

*Laer.* Must there no more be done ?

*First Priest.* No more be done :

We should profane the service of the dead 241  
To sing a requiem and such rest to her  
As to peace-parted souls.

*Laer.* Lay her i' th' earth :  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring ! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be,  
When thou liest howling.

*Ham.* What, the fair Ophelia !

*Queen.* Sweets to the sweet : farewell !

[Scattering flowers.]

226. [*Fordo*=destroy. *it own life*: see note on Act I., sc. ii., l. 216.] *estate*=rank.

237. *her virgin rites*: so the folio; the quarto, *virgin crants*, which, *Krantz* being German for a garland, some editors have retained.



I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife ;  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

*Laer.*

Oh, treble woe 251

Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense  
Deprived thee of ! Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms :

*[Leaps into the grave.]*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,  
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus.

*Ham.* *[Advancing.]* What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis ? whose phrase of sorrow 260  
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers ? This is I,  
Hamlet, the Dane.

*[Leaps into the grave.]*

*Laer.*

The Devil take thy soul !

*[Grappling with him.]*

*Ham.* Thou pray'st not well.  
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat ;  
For, though I am not spleenative and rash,  
Yet have I something in me dangerous,  
Which let thy wiseness fear : hold off thy hand.

*King.* Pluck them asunder.

*Queen.*

Hamlet, Hamlet !

*All.* Gentlemen, —

*Hor.*

Good my lord, be quiet. 270

*[The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.]*

263. **Hamlet, the Dane.** Hamlet here asserts himself as rightful King of Denmark.

266. **spleenative**=filled with spleen; of old the supposed cause of anger.

*Ham.* Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

*Queen.* O my son, what theme?

*Ham.* I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

*King.* Oh, he is mad, Laertes.

*Queen.* For love of God, forbear him.

*Ham.* 'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do:  
Woo 't weep? woo 't fight? woo 't fast? woo 't tear  
thyself? 280

Woo 't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?  
I'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine?  
To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:  
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw  
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,  
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,  
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,  
I'll rant as well as thou.

*Queen.* This is mere madness;  
And thus awhile the fit will work on him; 290  
Anon, as patient as the female dove,  
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,  
His silence will sit drooping.

*Ham.* Hear you, sir;

280. **Woo 't:** a rude colloquial form of "wilt thou," used by Hamlet in derisive scorn.

281. **eisel:** of unknown meaning, unless it means vinegar. Printed *Esill* and *Esile* in the quartos and folios, it has been supposed to be the name of some unknown river.

292. **her golden couplets:** the dove has but two nestlings, which at first are covered with yellow down, and over these she broods constantly for the first few days, not trusting her mate, and leaving them but for a moment to get necessary food.

What is the reason that you use me thus?  
I loved you ever: but it is no matter;  
Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew and dog will have his day. [Exit.

*King.* I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.  
[Exit Horatio.

[To *Laertes.*] Strengthen your patience in our last  
night's speech;

We'll put the matter to the present push. — 300

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son. —

This grave shall have a living monument:

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *A hall in the castle.*

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO.*

*Ham.* So much for this, sir: now shall you see the  
other:

You do remember all the circumstance?

*Hor.* Remember it, my lord!

*Ham.* Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,  
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay  
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly, —  
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,

1, 4. *sir*: This formal courtesy (which Hamlet has not used to Horatio since their first meeting) indicates no change of feeling toward his friend on the Prince's part, nor any assumption of superior rank, but a slight and momentary hardening of his heart in recollecting what he is about to relate.

6. *mutines in the bilboes*: *mutines* = mutineers; *bilboes* = fetters made by rings running on iron rods, used on shipboard, and manufactured in Bilboa, Spain, like the bilboa blades, whence their name.

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,  
 When our deep plots do pall : and that should teach us  
 There's a divinity that shapes our ends, 10  
 Rough-hew them how we will, —

*Hor.*

That is most certain.

*Ham.* Up from my cabin,  
 My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark  
 Groped I to find out them ; had my desire ;  
 Finger'd their packet ; and in fine withdrew  
 To mine own room again, making so bold,  
 My fears forgetting manners, to unseal  
 Their grand commission ; where I found, Horatio, —  
 O royal knavery ! — an exact command,  
 Larded with many several sorts of reasons 20  
 Importing Denmark's health and England's too,  
 With, ho ! such bugs and goblins in my life,  
 That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,  
 No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,  
 My head should be struck off.

*Hor.*

Is't possible ?

*Ham.* Here's the commission : read it at more  
 leisure.

But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed ?

*Hor.* I beseech you.

*Ham.* Being thus be-netted round with villanies, —  
 Ere I could make a prologue to my brains, 30  
 They had begun the play, — I sat me down,  
 Devised a new commission, wrote it fair :  
 I once did hold it, as our statist's do,

12. **Up from my cabin.** From "Rashly," line 6, to these words, all is parenthetical.

13. **sea-gown**=a short, short-sleeved gown worn on ship-board.

22. **bugs**=terrible things.

33. **statists**=statesmen.

A baseness to write fair, and laboured much  
How to forget that learning, but, sir, now  
It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know  
The effect of what I wrote?

*Hor.* Ay, good my lord.

*Ham.* An earnest conjuration from the King,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
As love between them like the palm might flourish, 40  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear  
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,  
And many such-like *as-es* of great charge,  
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less,  
He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving time allow'd.

*Hor.* How was this seal'd?

*Ham.* Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.  
I had my father's signet in my purse,  
Which was the model of that Danish seal; 50  
Folded the writ up in form of the other,  
Subscribed it, gave't the impression, placed it safely,  
The changeling never known. Now, the next day  
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent  
Thou know'st already.

*Hor.* So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

*Ham.* Why, man, they did make love to this employment;

36. **yeoman's service**=service like that which a yeoman owed to his lord. [The sturdy yeomen, such as Chaucer paints in his *Canterbury Prologue*, were the pith and marrow of an army.]

42. **a comma**: a very perplexing word; not improbably a misprint of "cement:" but, as *comma* is a connecting as well as a separative point in a sentence, the old reading cannot safely be disturbed.

They are not near my conscience ; their defeat  
Does by their own insinuation grow :

'T is dangerous when the baser nature comes  
Between the pass and fell incensed points  
Of mighty opposites.

*Hor.* Why, what a king is this !

*Ham.* Does it not, thinks thee, stand me now  
upon —

He that hath kill'd my king and stain'd my mother,  
Popp'd in between the election and my hopes,  
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,  
And with such cozenage — is 't not perfect conscience,  
To quit him with this arm ; and is 't not to be damn'd,  
To let this canker of our nature come  
In further evil ?

*Hor.* It must be shortly known to him from Eng-  
land

What is the issue of the business there.

*Ham.* It will be short : the interim is mine ;  
And a man's life 's no more than to say " One."  
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,  
That to Laertes I forgot myself ;  
For, by the image of my cause, I see  
The portraiture of his : I 'll court his favours :  
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me  
Into a towering passion.

*Hor.* Peace ! who comes here ?

63. **thinks thee**=it seems to thee, as in "methinks."  
["Thinks," in both these expressions, is not our familiar word,  
but comes from an old English verb meaning to seem, to appear.  
It is used impersonally, with a dative.] **stand me now upon**  
=become my duty.

74. **to say One**=one pass with the rapier, as at fencing.

*Enter OSRIC.*

*Osr.* Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

*Ham.* I humbly thank you, sir. — Dost know this water-fly?

*Hor.* No, my good lord.

*Ham.* Thy state is the more gracious; for 't is a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the King's mess: 't is a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt. 90

*Osr.* Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

*Ham.* I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Your bonnet to his right use; 't is for the head.

*Osr.* I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

*Ham.* No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

*Osr.* It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

*Ham.* But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion. 101

*Osr.* Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, — as 't were, — I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head: sir, this is the matter, —

*Ham.* I beseech you, remember —

*[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.]*

89. **chough**=a sort of jackdaw. [In Cornwall the word is pronounced *chow*. Here it may perhaps be confused with *chuff*=churl.]

101. **my complexion**=my constitution.

106. **remember**: that is, remember thy courtesy; as in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act V., sc. i., l. 103. The phrase was a conventional one for "Be covered." But it is hard to tell why. The

*Osr.* Nay, good my lord ; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes ; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing : indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see. 113

*Ham.* Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you ; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article ; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror ; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more. 122

*Osr.* Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

*Ham.* The concernancy, sir ? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath ?

*Osr.* Sir ?

*Hor.* Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue ? You will do 't, sir, really.

*Ham.* What imports the nomination of this gentleman ? 130

*Osr.* Of Laertes ?

*Hor.* His purse is empty already ; all 's golden words are spent.

removal of the hat, in Shakespeare's time, even more than now, was regarded as a mark of courtesy.

117. *yaw*: a sailor's phrase = to deviate from the true course, not answering the helm. But to explain Hamlet's talk or Osric's in this scene would do more than dizzy the arithmetic of memory: it would spoil the scene for those who can enjoy it.

119. [*his infusion* = the essential spirit of the man. *dearth* = dearness, preciousness.]



*Ham.* Of him, sir.

*Osr.* I know you are not ignorant —

*Ham.* I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

*Osr.* You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is — 139

*Ham.* I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

*Osr.* I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfollowed.

*Ham.* What's his weapon?

*Osr.* Rapier and dagger.

*Ham.* That's two of his weapons: but, well. 143

*Osr.* The King, sir, hath waged with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

*Ham.* What call you the carriages?

*Hor.* I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

*Osr.* The carriages, sir, are the hangers. 159

*Ham.* The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I

144. [in his meed: in his excellence, the effect, meed (reward) being put for the cause.]

150. imponed=impawned. The quartos have *impaund*.

153. very dear to fancy=very precious, according to the Osrics of our day.

157. edified by the margent: by the explanatory notes upon the margin.

would it might be hangers till then. But, on : six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages ; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this "imponed," as you call it ?

*Osr.* The King, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits : he hath laid on twelve for nine ; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer. 171

*Ham.* How if I answer no ?

*Osr.* I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

*Ham.* Sir, I will walk here in the hall ; if it please his majesty, 't is the breathing time of day with me ; let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can ; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits. 180

*Osr.* Shall I re-deliver you e'en so ?

*Ham.* To this effect, sir ; after what flourish your nature will.

*Osr.* I commend my duty to your lordship.

*Ham.* Yours, yours. [*Exit Osr.*] He does well to commend it himself ; there are no tongues else for 's turn.

*Hor.* This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head. 189

*Ham.* He did comply with his dug, before he suck'd it. Thus has he — and many more of the

169. [twelve for nine: the terms of this wager are difficult, if not impossible, to understand, and wholly unimportant.]

176. breathing time = time for exercise.

190. comply = pass compliments.

same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on — only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

*Enter a Lord.*

*Lord.* My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall: he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time. 202

*Ham.* I am constant to my purposes; they follow the King's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

*Lord.* The King and Queen and all are coming down.

*Ham.* In happy time.

*Lord.* The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play. 211

*Ham.* She well instructs me. [Exit Lord.]

*Hor.* You will lose this wager, my lord.

*Ham.* I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

*Hor.* Nay, good my lord, —

*Ham.* It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving, as would perhaps trouble a woman. 220

195. [the most fond and winnowed opinions: no explanation yet offered is here quite satisfactory. Probably **fond**=foolish, and **winnowed**=affectedly choice, over-fine.]

220. gain-giving: a strange compound, possibly used for against-giving, misgiving.

*Hor.* If your mind dislike any thing, obey it : I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

*Ham.* Not a whit ; we defy augury : there 's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 't is not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now ; if it be not now, yet it will come : the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes ? Let be.

*Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, Lords, OSRIC, and Attendants with foils, etc.*

*King.* Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me. 230

*[The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.]*

*Ham.* Give me your pardon, sir : I 've done you wrong ;

But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows,

And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd

With sore distraction. What I have done,

That might your nature, honour and exception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was 't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes ? Never Hamlet :

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he 's not himself does wrong Laertes, 240

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then ? His madness : if 't be so,

Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd ;

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

228. Since no man has aught, etc. : The "it" of this speech might refer to retribution for the murder of Hamlet's father; but this passage shows that he is dreamily thinking about himself and his own death. [Dr. Johnson thought that *knows*, a word which appears in the obscure quarto reading, should be substituted for *has*.]

Sir, in this audience,  
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil  
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,  
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,  
And hurt my brother.

*Laer.* I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most 250  
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour  
I stand aloof; and will no reconciliation,  
Till by some elder masters, of known honour,  
I have a voice and precedent of peace,  
To keep my name ungored. But till that time,  
I do receive your offer'd love like love,  
And will not wrong it.

*Ham.* I embrace it freely;  
And will this brother's wager frankly play.  
Give us the foils. Come on.

*Laer.* Come, one for me.

*Ham.* I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine igno-  
rance 260

Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,  
Stick fiery off indeed.

*Laer.* You mock me, sir.

*Ham.* No, by this hand.

*King.* Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin  
Hamlet,  
You know the wager?

*Ham.* Very well, my lord;  
Your grace hath laid the odds o' th' weaker side.

*King.* I do not fear it; I have seen you both:  
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.

266. [the odds: Hamlet refers to the greater value of the King's stake, as compared with that of Laertes; not to the number of hits, which is what the King refers to in his reply. (Jennens.)]

*Laer.* This is too heavy, let me see another.

*Ham.* This likes me well. These foils have all a length? [*They prepare to play.*]

*Osr.* Ay, my good lord. 271

*King.* Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,

Or quit in answer of the third exchange,

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;

And in the cup an union shall he throw,

Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak, 280

The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,

"Now the King drinks to Hamlet." Come, begin:

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

*Ham.* Come on, sir.

*Laer.* Come, my lord. [*They play.*]

*Ham.* One.

*Laer.* No.

*Ham.* Judgement.

*Osr.* A hit, a very palpable hit.

*Laer.* Well; again.

*King.* Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine:

Here's to thy health.

[*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*]

Give him the cup.

274. [quit in answer of the third exchange = pay back Laertes in meeting him at the third encounter. (Clarendon Press editors.)]

277. an union = a pearl of great price.

280. [kettle = kettledrum.]

*Ham.* I'll play this bout first ; set it by awhile.

Come. [*They play.*] Another hit ; what say you ? 290

*Laer.* A touch, a touch, I do confess.

*King.* Our son shall win.

*Queen.* He's fat, and scant of breath.

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows :

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

*Ham.* Good madam !

*King.* Gertrude, do not drink.

*Queen.* I will, my lord ; I pray you, pardon me.

*King.* [*Aside.*] It is the poison'd cup : it is too late.

*Ham.* I dare not drink yet, madam ; by and by.

*Queen.* Come, let me wipe thy face.

*Laer.* My lord, I'll hit him now.

*King.* I do not think 't.

*Laer.* [*Aside.*] And yet 't is almost 'gainst my conscience. 301

*Ham.* Come, for the third, Laertes : you but dally ;  
I pray you, pass with your best violence ;

I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

*Laer.* Say you so ? come on. [*They play.*

*Osr.* Nothing, neither way.

*Laer.* Have at you now !

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet ; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

*King.* Part them ; they are incensed.

*Ham.* Nay, come, again. [*The Queen falls.*

*Osr.* Look to the Queen there, ho !

*Hor.* They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord ?

*Osr.* How is 't, Laertes ? 310

292. **He's fat:** Burbadge, the first Hamlet, was a portly man. ["The phrase merely means 'He's out of training.' A fat Hamlet is as inconceivable as a lean Falstaff." — Lowell.]

304. **a wanton**=a trifler

*Laer.* Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe,  
Osric ;

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

*Ham.* How does the Queen ?

*King.* She swoonds to see them bleed.

*Queen.* No, no, the drink, the drink, — O my dear  
Hamlet, —

The drink, the drink ! I am poison'd. [Dies.]

*Ham.* O villany ! Ho ! let the door be lock'd :  
Treachery ! Seek it out.

*Laer.* It is here, Hamlet : Hamlet, thou art slain ;  
No medicine in the world can do thee good ;  
In thee there is not half an hour of life ; 320  
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,  
Unbated and envenom'd : the foul practice  
Hath turn'd itself on me ; lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again : thy mother 's poison'd :  
I can no more : the King, the King 's to blame.

*Ham.* The point envenom'd too !

Then, venom, to thy work ! [Stabs the King.]

*All.* Treason ! treason !

*King.* Oh, yet defend me, friends ; I am but hurt.

*Ham.* Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned  
Dane, 330

Drink off this potion. Is thy union here ?

Follow my mother.

[King dies.]

*Laer.* He is justly served ;

It is a poison temper'd by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet :

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me ! [Dies.]

*Ham.* Heaven make thee free of it ! I follow thee.  
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu !  
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,



That are but mutes or audience to this act,  
 Had I but time — as this fell sergeant, death,  
 Is strict in his arrest — oh, I could tell you —  
 But let it be. Horatio, I am dead ;  
 Thou livest ; report me and my cause aright  
 To the unsatisfied.

349

*Hor.* Never believe it :  
 I am more an antique Roman than a Dane :  
 Here 's yet some liquor left.

*Ham,* As thou 'rt a man,  
 Give me the cup : let go ; by heaven, I 'll have 't.  
 O good Horatio, what a wounded name,  
 Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me !  
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
 To tell my story. *[March afar off, and shot within.*

What warlike noise is this ?

*Osr.* Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from  
 Poland,  
 To the ambassadors of England gives  
 This warlike volley.

*Ham.* Oh, I die, Horatio ;  
 The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit :  
 I cannot live to hear the news from England ;  
 But I do prophesy the election lights  
 On Fortinbras : he has my dying voice ;  
 So tell him with the occurrents, more and less,  
 Which have solicited. The rest is silence. *[Dies.*

360

349. [O good Horatio: the quartos substantially agree in reading "O God, Horatio!"]

350. [shall live: the quartos read "I leave."]

358. [o'er-crows = triumphs over.]

362. the occurrents, etc. = the occurrences which have brought all this about.

*Hor.* Now cracks a noble heart. Good night,  
sweet prince ;

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !

Why does the drum come hither ? [March within.]

*Enter FORTINBRAS, the English Ambassadors, and others.*

*Fort.* Where is this sight ?

*Hor.* What is it ye would see ?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

*Fort.* This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell, 370  
That thou so many princes at a shot  
So bloodily hast struck ?

*First Amb.* The sight is dismal ;  
And our affairs from England come too late :  
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,  
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,  
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead :  
Where should we have our thanks ?

*Hor.* Not from his mouth,  
Had it the ability of life to thank you :  
He never gave commandment for their death.  
But since, so jump upon this bloody question, 380  
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,  
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies  
High on a stage be placed to the view ;  
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
How these things came about : so shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,

369. cries on=cries out. The quarry (=the heap of dead) proclaims the havoc that has been made.

377. Not from his mouth=not from the King's.

380. [jump=exactly.]

And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fall'n on the inventors' heads : all this can I  
Truly deliver.

390

*Fort.* Let us haste to hear it,  
And call the noblest to the audience.  
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune :  
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,  
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

*Hor.* Of that I shall have also cause to speak,  
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more :  
But let this same be presently perform'd,  
Even while men's minds are wild ; lest more mis-  
chance,

On plots and errors, happen.

*Fort.* Let four captains 400  
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage ;  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have proved most royally : and, for his passage,  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him.  
Take up the bodies : such a sight as this  
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.  
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march. Exeunt bearing off the dead bodies : after  
which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*]

## SUGGESTIONS FOR SPECIAL STUDY.

### *Age of Hamlet, and Duration of the Action.*

THIS is the first important problem which confronts the student. How old was "young Hamlet"? Laertes and Polonius speak of him in terms certainly not applicable to a man over twenty-five, and, indeed, most appropriate to a youth of twenty. (See Act I., sc. iii.) The university age, in Shakespeare's time, — and Shakespeare really paints his time, whatever he is ostensibly painting, — was from seventeen to nineteen. Hamlet envies Laertes' fencing, "a very riband in the cap of youth." On the other hand, the range of Hamlet's intellect and the depth of his reflections on life convey a notion of maturity, which is confirmed by the Gravedigger's words (Act V., sc. i.). A Hamlet of twenty is difficult to conceive; yet a Hamlet of thirty is equally unacceptable as Ophelia's "crescent" lover in Act I. In order to escape from this difficulty, it has been suggested that Shakespeare "compressed into five acts the incidents of eight or ten years." But such a theory may be immediately disproved by the student in a dozen ways. On the other hand, some hasty critics have concluded that "the entire action cannot cover more than ten days." Here also disproof is easy. The time-analyses of Heussi, Marshall, and Daniel range between two and five months, the difference arising from the various intervals allowed between Acts I. and II., and between the fourth and fifth scenes of Act IV. But in the end it becomes necessary to fall back upon our knowledge of Shakespeare's peculiar method of dealing with time; his habit of introducing "two series of times, — the one suggestive and illusory, the other visible and explicitly stated. Halpin calls them the *protractive* series and the *accelerating* series. Christopher North calls them Shakespeare's 'two clocks.'" This method, in its application to Hamlet, is traced in the Preface to Dr. Furness's Variorum Edition of the play, from which the passage just quoted is taken. The student is advised, after considering the more vital interests of the drama, to make, independently, a table of the *protractive* and the *accelerating*

time-notes of this drama, and to compare it with Dr. Furness's Preface.

If, then, the contradiction in regard to time is deliberate, it appears that there is no means of arriving at the precise duration of the action, or at Hamlet's true age; we must simply yield ourselves to Shakespeare, and receive from him successive impressions as the play goes forward. It will be found that the resultant general impression is that of a terrible forcing process, which converts the young man of the university, with his mind full of "trivial fond records," into a great and sad figure of suffering and questioning manhood, whose age we should be unlikely to ask, since our chief concern is with his soul.

### *The Character of Hamlet.*

Without assuming to pluck out the heart of Hamlet's mystery, — which mystery constitutes the fascination of the play, — it seems well to direct the attention of the student to a few essential points. We must understand the phase of spiritual experience presented in Hamlet as we first meet him. An idealist, a dreamer, he has suddenly been brought face to face with concrete evil. The shock has produced an inability to deal with life. The soul stagnates; and "a thousand thousand slimy things," the loathed shapes of suspicion, stir within it.

It matters little to us whether this acute realization of the evil possibilities of life has been forced upon a very young man, or upon an older student who has never until now come into relation with facts. But in the actual world, the shock of fronting evil is apt to come to a man rather early. We shall therefore find the most convenient illustrations of this phase of experience in the writings of young men. When John Keats was twenty-three, he wrote to his friend Reynolds a most suggestive letter, in which he compared human life to "a large mansion of many apartments. . . . The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us. We no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere; we see

nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there forever in delight : *However, among the effects this breathing is father of, is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of man, — of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heart-break, Pain, Sickness, and Oppression, — whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open, but all dark, — all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil, — we are in a mist, — we are now in that state. We feel the 'burden of the Mystery.'* To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey.'"

The words quoted by Keats are imperishable symbols of the universal affliction —

" the burthen of the mystery,  
 . . . The heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world."

They remind us that even the young Wordsworth had his shock of disillusionment, his period of dullness and despair, when he seemed, in his own words, to have reached "the soul's last and lowest ebb." But he was already past "the crisis of that strong disease" when he wrote "Tintern Abbey."

It is to the early work of Shelley that we should most naturally turn for expressions of a mood consequent upon the sudden revelation of evil. We find the voice, that was sometimes almost preternaturally sweet, "out of tune and harsh;" the exquisitely organized youth shrieks at his sudden vision of the horror of the world. And the study of Shelley helps us to understand certain painful developments of Hamlet's disease. It is precisely because of Hamlet's original delicate purity of mind that evil images impress him so profoundly; the very depth of his disgust creates a taint of the imagination. Foul suspicions, foreign to his being, "live through him, like animal life;" compare the torture which the Furies design for Shelley's Prometheus. Hamlet's clear thoughts are envenomed, and broken to pieces, like a Venice glass shattered by poison.

In a nature endowed with humor, — which was lacking in both Shelley and Keats, — the form of expression proper to this mood is irony; and we accordingly find Hamlet ironical in habit from first to last. Mr. Lowell remarks: "Hamlet's perpetual inclination to irony has been generally passed over too

lightly, as if it were something external and accidental, rather assumed as a mask than part of the real nature of the man." "Hamlet's oblique and enigmatic style"—accounted madness by Polonius and others—"is a genuine exercise of irony, and consequently covers a feeling and purpose that are directly opposite to its tone of lightness. His mind instinctively saves itself by this sustained gesture of irony." (John Weiss.)

If this peculiarity of Hamlet be apprehended, the reader will more readily understand the otherwise perplexing brutality of his behavior to Polonius and to Ophelia. (Act II., sc. ii., and Act III., scenes i. and ii.) His coarse and bitter speeches really spring from his feeling of outrage at the motives which, he well understands, have been imputed to him by Polonius; and he makes Ophelia suffer because she appears to have accepted her father's analysis of the situation. He chooses to fall in with Polonius' notion of him, exciting and tormenting himself with the sardonic diversion which puzzles the father and pains the daughter.

The student will find that not a few of the difficulties of *Hamlet* can be unlocked by the use of these three keys: the inability to deal with life, consequent upon sudden disillusionment; the poisoned imagination; the ironic attitude. (Attention may be drawn here to Carlyle's skilful reproduction, in *Sartor Resartus*, of the tone of Hamlet, in such a passage as Act II., sc. ii., lines 293-311.)

### *The Relation of Hamlet to Shakespeare.*

The principal pitfall of this play is the danger of completely identifying Hamlet with Shakespeare. The thoughtless reader is always likely to confuse the dramatist with the *dramatis personæ*; so that we hear Jaques' account of the seven ages of man quoted as "Shakespeare's picture of life," or the words of Macbeth, "Life's but a walking shadow," as "Shakespeare's verdict on the vanity of existence." But, in the case of Hamlet, even the careful student may mistake. For it is true that, to a certain extent, Hamlet is Shakespeare. Shakespeare has given to Hamlet the power of his intellect, as he has, in some measure, to all his greatest creations. Othello, Lear, Macbeth,—each is the essential, individual man, *plus* Shakespeare's mind, his magnificence of imagination or his reach of speculation; but Shakespeare has not made over to any one of them the character which

controlled his intellect. In the cases of Hamlet and Prospero, however, he has superadded to this gift of his own intellectual greatness the mantle of his passing (or of his final) mood. We may determine this fact by properly placing *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* in the train of dramas that exhibit Shakespeare's development. We find that the figure of the brooding Prince stands at the entrance to Shakespeare's dark room, — the great third or tragic period. Shakespeare was occupied with this creation at the very time when he himself was beginning to front, with suffering, the concrete evil of the world. And we find that the benign face of Prospero looks to the calm sunset; he is the highest expression of that spirit of reconciliation with life that pervades Shakespeare's last group of plays. Yet we cannot too strongly insist that neither Hamlet nor Prospero is to be completely identified with Shakespeare.

The error in the case of Hamlet is particularly deplorable in its consequences. For, though Hamlet's constant mood resembles a transient mood of Shakespeare, it is most unlikely that Shakespeare steadily viewed the other persons of the play with Hamlet's eyes, or that he would desire us to do so. Hamlet may express something of Shakespeare's suffering, but the total Shakespeare he does not express. Here, as elsewhere, the soul of Shakespeare overarches his creations like the sky; and his tolerance is almost infinite.

### *The Revenge-Motive.*

See Act I., sc. v., l. 25. Does Shakespeare regard this injunction of the Ghost as imposing a duty, or as presenting a temptation to crime?

Upon the answer which we make to this question will depend our understanding of the hesitation of Hamlet, and our notion of the underlying moral scheme of the play. Is it likely that Shakespeare built his tragedy on the basis of the criminality of revenge? We shall come closest to his probable point of view as a dramatist by examining the dramas of his time. It will be found that the revenge-play was a well-defined and exceedingly popular species. Before 1603 there were several notable revenge-plays. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is a fair example. The chief action is the revenge of the mad old general, Hieronimo, for the slaying of his son. The treatment is direct and simple, and there is not the slightest doubt that the writer is in full



sympathy with Hieronimo. To the same period in the history of the Elizabethan drama belongs *Titus Andronicus*, — probably not by Shakespeare. Read the conclusion of the speech of Marcus Andronicus to the Romans, Act V., sc. iii., — “Now judge what cause had Titus to revenge,” ending with the question, “Have we done aught amiss?” The reply of the people is to make the son of Titus their emperor. The attitude of the writer is clear, — he approves the conduct of Titus.

A similar attitude, apparently, is that of John Marston, the author of *Antonio's Revenge, or the Second Part of Antonio and Mellida*. The duty of revenge was, plainly, a convention of the stage in Shakespeare's time. Is it not possible that as a convention he accepted it, whatever his personal view of the nobility and necessity of forgiveness? Which is more probable, the hypothesis just formulated, or the supposition that, basing Hamlet on the lines of an old play very like *The Spanish Tragedy* (see Introduction), Shakespeare actually turned a revenge-play into a dramatic sermon against revenge?

If we accept the former hypothesis, it is not necessary to suppose that Shakespeare approved revenge, but that he was not concerning himself with the ethics of revenge when he wrote *Hamlet*. He was concerning himself with Hamlet's performance or non-performance of something admitted by the Prince himself to be a duty. With the writers of the revenge-plays just mentioned, the revenge itself, in its detailed execution, is the object of interest. With Shakespeare it is otherwise. He is almost indifferent, and makes us almost indifferent, to the sequel; we are fascinated in watching that which really engages his attention, — the play of Hamlet's mind. Shakespeare uses the revenge-plot as a framework; just as in *Paradise Lost* Milton, who had visited Galileo in his prison, adopts the Ptolemaic system as a framework; just as Browning, in *The Statue and the Bust*, exclaims: —

“I hear you reproach, ‘But delay was best,  
For their end was a crime.’ Oh, a crime will do  
As well, I reply, to serve for a test  
As a virtue golden through and through.”

### *The Hesitation of Hamlet.*

Any reader who believes, with Mr. Hudson, that Shakespeare regards the Ghost's injunction as a temptation to crime, logically

ascribes the singular hesitation of Hamlet to a moral scruple. But those who believe that revenge is here treated in a conventional manner only, hold that this very hesitation of the hero is itself the real theme of the play, and has its source either in Hamlet's intellectual constitution, or in the peculiar phase of human experience through which he is passing. To Goethe it seems clear that Shakespeare "sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it." Schlegel explains this inadequacy in Hamlet's nature as the result of "a calculating consideration, which, seeking to exhaust all the relations and possible consequences of a deed to the very limits of human foresight, cripples the power of action." Coleridge calls it an "overbalance in the contemplative faculty," by which "man becomes the creature of mere meditation, and loses his natural power of action." There has already been suggested a somewhat different theory, which finds the chief reason for Hamlet's inaction in a crippling of the will, caused by the tremendous shock of suddenly confronting, close at hand, the evil of the world. In this latter case, the inability to act may be only temporary. Is it so represented or not?

Find utterances of Hamlet in Act II., sc. ii., and Act IV., sc. iv., which show that he is conscious of the strangeness of his hesitancy. What passages in these scenes confirm the analysis of Schlegel? What passage in Act III., sc. i., sustains that of Coleridge? What lines in Act I., sc. v., must have suggested that of Goethe?

### *The Madness of Hamlet.*

The final word on this subject has been said by Mr. Lowell: "If we deprive Hamlet of reason, there is no truly tragic motive left. If Hamlet is irresponsible, the whole play is a chaos." It must be admitted that his mental condition is unhealthy; yet "a definition of insanity which includes Hamlet would sweep at least three fourths of mankind into the madhouse." (D. J. Snider.) See *Analysis* of the close of Act I., sc. iv.

### ANALYSIS IN DETAIL.

*Act I., sc. i.* As in most cases, this preliminary scene takes us into the characteristic atmosphere of the play. Each of Shakespeare's greatest dramas has, for the sensitive reader, such an atmosphere. Contrast, for instance, the opening scenes of *Hamlet*

with those of *Romeo and Juliet*. Bitter cold, under the cheerless burning of the far-away stars; a sense of dread mystery; the heartsick loneliness of a sentinel on duty, — these are fit elements in the overture to this great tragedy, with its lonely and doubting hero, holding his weary watch, benumbed in spirit, under that “majestical roof fretted with golden fire,” which now appears to him “no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.”

What characteristics of Horatio appear in this scene? What is the impression produced upon the reader by the figure of the Ghost, and what expedients contribute to this impression? Note the slow upward slope of the action toward sc. iv. What would have been the effect if sc. i. had been omitted, and the necessary explanatory passages distributed through scenes ii. and iv.? What are the most poetic touches in sc. i.?

*Sc. ii.* Does Shakespeare intend to represent Denmark as a strictly hereditary monarchy? in other words, is Claudius a usurper? See Act V., sc. ii., l. 65 and l. 360. What is noticeable in the structure of the first part of Claudius' speech, in which he justifies his recent action? Observe the change of manner as he turns to the business of the hour. Mark the mention of young Fortinbras for the second time. This thread of interest, woven through the play, is highly important, not only to the plot, but to the more vital moral theme. What is probably the nature of the connection between Claudius and Polonius, as suggested by the attitude of the King toward Laertes?

Hamlet's first words are highly characteristic. It is as though his mood of irritation at his anomalous relationship to Claudius were distilled into one drop of intense bitterness. (See note on line 65.) It is thus early made evident that Hamlet considers his mother's marriage in itself a thing unnatural, apart from its haste; and this is confirmed by the subsequent violence of his language on this point.

“Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun,” is full of meaning; but in trying to grasp its remoter suggestions we must not lose its immediate application. Hamlet denies, ironically, that the clouds of sorrow hang upon him: no, indeed, he is too much in the garish light of the court rejoicing for that; too much in the sun of Claudius' offensive favor (“the cheer and comfort of our eye”). (See note on l. 67.) It is possible that there is a swift Shakespearian quibble, — Hamlet is too often on Claudius' lips

as "my son." The quartos have "sonne," a common confusion: see *Richard III.*, Act I., sc. i., l. 2. (This equivocal sense may be rather startling to us. Our modern way of treating words is, indeed, very different. The man of the Renaissance handled a word as a live thing, or turned it about as a jewel to catch different lights. Notice that Claudius had just emphatically uttered the word "son," and consider its offensiveness to Hamlet; and before concluding that no word-play is intended, examine *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III., sc. ii., lines 45-50, and sc. v., lines 29-30; or *Richard II.*, Act II., sc. i., lines 72-83.)

The conciliatory tone of the Queen's first speech shows the yearning of the weak heart toward the son she cannot understand. We yet know nothing of the guilt of Claudius and the Queen; but we feel that their efforts to console Hamlet are an instance of the supreme bad taste of shallow natures. "Thou know'st 't is common" is, considering the speaker and circumstances, a revelation of vulgarity of soul. Note that the word "common" is again twice used in the next speech of Claudius. Hamlet's repressed answer to his mother suggests the passage in *In Memoriam*, VI. :—

"One writes, that other friends remain,  
That loss is common to the race;  
And common is the commonplace,  
And vacant chaff well meant for grain."

Coleridge notes that Hamlet's restraint "prepares him for the overflow in the next speech." The unlucky word "seems" is the spark to gunpowder; sensitive to the touch of insincerity in the word, the Prince lets his indignation break out. In his long speech there is perceptible a certain sense of the hopelessness of any explanation of real feeling to a soul like his mother's, lost in shows, content with surfaces.

Select the words in the King's speech to Hamlet, lines 87-117, which must jar upon the latter by representing sorrow merely as a formal debt. What line, craftily inserted, shows us what Claudius suspects to be the main source of Hamlet's disaffection? Summing up the utterances of Claudius in this scene, are we to conclude him a man of ability or otherwise?

In Hamlet's soliloquy, lines 129-159, we find expressed the immense disgust with life springing from that revelation of his mother's weakness which has cast a doubt upon all things dear. (Compare Act III., sc. iv., lines 40-48.) The strong image of

the "unweeded garden," possessed wholly by "things rank and gross in nature," is terribly worked out by Shelley in the latter part of *The Sensitive Plant*: —

"Between the time of the wind and the snow,  
All loathliest weeds began to grow,  
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,  
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,  
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,  
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,  
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew."

The grossness of the voluptuous Claudius, as he appears to Hamlet, is indicated by the latter's comparison between the bright sun-god and a satyr, — lust and gluttony being the satyr's characteristics. Yet the only hint of the King's voluptuous nature which we have, up to this point, received, is the very slight suggestion contained in his words relating to "the King's rouse." Hamlet's scorn of his uncle's low pleasures flashes out again in his welcome to Horatio; see l. 175. Find the same note touched in Act I., sc. iv., and Act III., scenes ii. and iii. This is the scorn of pure intellect for the sensual sinner, which we find illustrated in Lady Macbeth's contemptuous reference to the "spongy officers" of Duncan. (*Macbeth*, Act I., sc. vii.) Another manifestation of the same scorn — in this case arising from a disastrous short-sightedness — is Brutus' underrating of Antony, *Julius Cæsar*, Act II., sc. i, lines 180–189. Does Claudius himself give, during the action, any evidence of habitual intemperance?

We have in this scene an opportunity to observe Hamlet as he appears in the court; again in the solitary abandonment of bitter grief; and at last with his friends. The last part is wonderfully convincing in its simple naturalness; the questions rapidly asked and answered leading up to the eager, decisive "I will watch to-night." The hunger of the lonely Hamlet for friendship is twice lightly but firmly touched in this conversation. It is not mere courtesy that makes the Prince insist upon the substitution of the word "friend" for Horatio's "your poor servant ever;" and, later, of the word "loves" for "duty." (See note on l. 253.) We shall find this yearning of Hamlet for real friendship balanced by his contempt for all flimsy substitutes.

*Sc. iii.* Laertes and Ophelia must, throughout the play, be considered on all sides, and not only in their relation to Hamlet. It is difficult to imagine Shakespeare in this scene as regarding the brother and sister with anything but a sympathetic and kindly interest. (See *The Relation of Hamlet to Shakespeare.*)

A spring wind laden with the violet seems to go forth before Ophelia. From the first, Shakespeare chooses to associate her and her girlish feeling for "the Lord Hamlet" with exquisite images of evanescence, as if he would intimate to us that this delicate flower must die. We shall find this association with the violet recurring later. The indirect method of subtly producing and repeating an impression thus, is a favorite expedient with Shakespeare; it resembles the repetition of a motive in Wagnerian opera.

Notice Ophelia's reserve in this scene. Does it necessarily imply shallowness of feeling? or, considering the scene by itself, does it positively imply the contrary? or does Ophelia, in the present stage of affairs, seem colorless to the reader? What single line suggests that it will be painful to her to follow her brother's advice? How does Laertes' view of Hamlet and of the situation differ from the views later expressed by Polonius? Is either to blame for his notion of the facts? Which exhibits the more wisdom in his manner of dealing with Ophelia? Is Ophelia to be blamed for trusting her brother? for obeying her father?

Does Shakespeare intend to represent Hamlet's love for Ophelia as an important factor in his life-problem? If so, why does he permit us to form our ideas of Hamlet's personality and circumstances, in *sc. ii.*, without intimating her existence? What passages in Hamlet's soliloquy, *sc. ii.*, have a certain negative force, implying that his love for Ophelia can neither reconcile him to life nor reestablish his confidence in human nature? When does it seem probable that the relation between the two sprang up?

Lines 51, 52. Notice how Laertes, in the pride of his young manhood, starts away from Ophelia's gentle little counter-warning, — since "for sisters to lecture brothers is an inversion of the natural order of things." (Moberly.) This is an unmistakable touch of nature and of humor; but it seems unnecessary to conclude, with Professor Dowden, that Laertes' words to his father (lines 53, 54) are a subterfuge to escape a scolding for

delay. "But," l. 52, would certainly not be the appropriate conjunction if "I stay too long" were connected in Laertes' mind with "here my father comes." Many critics have indulged a dislike of the old counsellor and his family, which shows itself in the utmost refinements of adverse interpretation. But we must not permit ourselves to think of Polonius exactly as the embittered Hamlet does. (See, again, *The Relation of Hamlet to Shakespeare*.) The sounder method is to ask, what is Shakespeare trying to do in presenting Polonius? He is painting a lifelike picture of a man of respectable abilities, grown old in statecraft. He does not undervalue the bits of practical wisdom uttered by Polonius to his son; nor is the book from which he took many of them, on the whole, a foolish book. He draws an old Elizabethan counsellor, decidedly Euphuistic in his manner of speech; we may conjecture that he had a living model. We shall learn more about Polonius by examining two or three bits of reality than by reading much fine-spun criticism. Look at the picture of Lord Burghley, in Lodge's "Portraits of Illustrious Personages;" examine a few of the didactic passages in *Euphues*, and some extracts from Lord Bacon's *Commentarius Solutus*, which you will find in Dean Church's Life of Bacon; read Sir Henry Sidney's letter of advice to his son Philip, which is quoted in Symonds' Life of Sidney. This letter affords a convenient illustration of the critical prejudice against Polonius. In regard to the latter's admonitions to Laertes, Professor Dowden says: "Polonius has got one great truth among his copy-book maxims, but it comes in as a little bit of hard, unvital wisdom like the rest: '*Dress well, don't lend or borrow money, to thine own self be true.*'" In a precisely similar manner Sir Henry Sidney, after writing "Let your first action be the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God by hearty prayer," continues: "Be courteous of gesture and affable to all men, with diversity of reverence according to the dignity of the person: there is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost. Use moderate diet. . . . Seldom drink wine. . . . If you hear a wise sentence or an apt phrase, commit it to your memory with respect to the circumstances when you will speak it." If the "worthy father," as Fulke Greville called him, of the noblest of Elizabethan knights, wrote this to his son, may we not conclude that Shakespeare had no ulterior meaning in the combination of great and little things in the advice of Polonius? If we feel in the pas-



sage a certain materialism and empiricism, these belonged to the time.

Polonius was a very inferior Lord Burghley, a much damaged Lord Bacon (viewed on the diplomatic side alone); and Shakespeare takes him humanly, producing for us, not a thin caricature, but a portrait as warmly real as a Rembrandt. This man not only overestimates himself, fatuously exulting in unnecessary finesse; not only naïvely exposes his conventional and false moral standard (Act II., sc. i.), prosed affectedly, interprets wrongly, and gets stupidly into Hamlet's way: he also loves his children, and is loved by them; exhibits the pathetic spectacle of failing powers; dies and is mourned. Try to see him as Shakespeare felt him, in the round.

It is a great privilege to have seen this part played by such an actor as John Gilbert. There remains in memory a most charming picture of this scene as he presented it on one occasion, with Madame Modjeska as Ophelia. Such a wise and moderate presentation brings out the human nature of Shakespeare's scenes as perhaps no mere reading can. The conversation between the father and daughter is perfectly real, and has the intermingled humor and pathos of reality. Conceive of the depth of Ophelia's sentiment as we may, there is pathos enough in the sharp contrast between the idealism of girlhood and the cynicism of the old man,—a cynicism doubtless created by his experience of the court and the recollection of his own presumably not blameless youth. The coarsening of a fine dream, the hard anticlimax, is indeed piteous.

*Sc. iv.* Coleridge remarks that "on the brink of any event of moment, men almost invariably endeavor to elude the pressure of their own thoughts by turning aside to trivial objects and familiar circumstances; thus the dialogue on the platform begins with remarks on the coldness of the air," etc. "The same desire to escape from the impending thought is carried on in Hamlet's account of, and moralizing on, the Danish custom of wassailing; he runs off from the particular to the universal, and, in his repugnance to personal and individual concerns, escapes, as it were, from himself in generalizations, and smothers the impatience and uneasy feeling of the moment in abstract reasoning. Besides this, another purpose is answered; for by thus entangling the attention of the audience in the nice distinctions and parenthetical sentences of this speech of Hamlet's, Shake-



speare takes them completely by surprise on the appearance of the Ghost. . . . But in addition to all the other excellences of Hamlet's speech concerning the wassail-music, — so finely revealing the predominant idealism, the ratiocinative meditateness of his character, — it has the advantage of giving nature and probability to the impassioned continuity of the speech instantly directed to the Ghost. The *momentum* had been given to Hamlet's mental activity."

It has been suggested that the passage beginning, "So, oft it chances in particular men," may be taken to imply a consciousness on Hamlet's part of some special defect in his own nature which serves to counteract his virtues. This idea connects itself with the theory of Coleridge and Schlegel. (See *The Hesitation of Hamlet*.) But it is to be noted that Hamlet here speaks of an injury to reputation only; it is not in reality, but in "the general censure," that the virtues of such men "take corruption from a particular fault." — What line, spoken by Hamlet after the appearance of the Ghost, may be brought into relation with sc. ii., lines 131, 132?

Sc. v. What is the difference between the Ghost in *Hamlet* and the Ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth*, Act III., sc. iv.? With which should we place the Ghosts in Richard III., Act V., sc. iii.? the ghosts of pre-Shakespearian tragedy in general? (For the earlier play of *Hamlet*, see Introduction.) Observe that Shakespeare used a crude convention of the stage very much after the manner of his contemporaries, — except that his treatment was more imaginative and powerful, — until he was ready to vitalize it, to bring it into accord with the facts of life. — Note the language of Hamlet in regard to the swiftness of his revenge. Lines 29-31 are evidently placed here to bring his future hesitation (prefigured by the richly imaginative lines 32-33) into stronger relief. — What is the testimony of the Ghost as to the cunning of Claudius? What epithet sufficiently characterizes Gertrude? Connect it with a passage in sc. ii. What words of Hamlet indicate a certain outward grace and plausibility in his uncle?

Immediately after the vanishing of the Ghost, we are startled by Hamlet's wild behavior. Coleridge observes in him "the disposition to escape from his own feelings of the overwhelming and supernatural by a wild transition to the ludicrous, — a sort of cunning bravado, bordering on the flights of delirium." Mr.

Edward Russell, in describing the presentation of *Hamlet* by Henry Irving, says: "Irving has noticed that Hamlet has a trick, not at all uncommon in persons whose most real life is an inner one, of *fostering and aggravating his own excitements*. The vivid, flashing, half-foolish, half-inspired, hysterical power of Irving, in the passages where it is developed, is a triumph of idiosyncrasy. . . . He makes the use of the tablets life-like and probable. His snatching them from his pocket and writing on them is the climax of an outburst hardly distinguishable from hysteria."

Hamlet's own consciousness of his singular condition, as Richardson early remarked, "suggests a mode of concealment. Knowing that he must appear incoherent and inconsistent, he is not unwilling to have it believed that his reason is somewhat disarranged." Find in this scene the first suggestion of a plan to counterfeit madness.

*Act II., sc. i.* Polonius has grown so used to indirect ways that he can set about nothing simply. We commonly lose the pathos of this senile diplomacy in the humor of it; and certainly the first part of the scene brings the old statesman before us at his worst. But with the entrance of Ophelia he becomes, to use the epithet of Coleridge in its fullest meaning, "respectable." Dr. Johnson remarks on the real sagacity displayed by Polonius in lines 112-115. A man of contemptible mind, the stock Polonius meant to be unremittingly laughed at, could not have originated this just and candid reflection.

Is the conclusion of Polonius and Ophelia in regard to Hamlet's madness and its cause unwarrantable? What is likely to have been passing in Hamlet's mind during the interview which Ophelia describes?

*Sc. ii.* Notice the plausibility of the King's speech. There is not the slightest intimation that his spying upon Hamlet is suggested by unfriendliness or guilty fear. Could not Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have justified their course in assisting his apparently kindly purpose? Notice also the Queen's estimate of Hamlet's regard for them. Is this deliberate flattery, or is she really misled? If the latter be the case, what trait of Gertrude is indicated? What is noticeable in the form and spirit of the first speeches of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? in the form of the royal thanks? What seems to be the bond of

agreement so uniting these young gentlemen as almost to merge their identities?

L. 68. The name of Fortinbras again rings in the mention, like the steel links of a coat of mail chiming one against another, as the warlike figure stirs, unseen. Shakespeare will not let us forget him, in all these tangled affairs of the court of Denmark.

L. 86. Polonius now has his opportunity, and uses it to his own harmless satisfaction, though in a manner to "make the judicious grieve." It is a great hour for Polonius! Whatever is to come, fate allows him now free play for his Euphuistic eloquence, a worthy cause for his diplomatic exertions, a delicious sense of his importance to royal personages. With the afterglow of this triumphant experience still upon him, poor Polonius encounters the Prince.

It is one of the wild diversions of Hamlet to let his mind, chameleon-like, take the color of the mind it approaches. Hence, in the scene with Polonius, he renders impure thoughts to one who has thought evil of him, and cynicism to one who will cry "Very true!" to the proposition that "To be honest is to be one man picked out of ten thousand." He purposely breaks the thread of connection and scatters his ideas; that is essential to his "antic disposition;" yet we can string them together again well enough. "Why not guard your daughter from the blessed sun itself, you who have locked her away from my love, that was as clean as sunlight?"

There is a fine transition from the elated Polonius' tone of condescension in the beginning of the interview to his hurt and puzzled "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't." Twice in this scene Hamlet recurs to his longing for death. Relate lines 207 and 217, to expressions of the same feeling, already noted in Act I., scenes ii. and iv.

Hamlet meets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with a factitious gayety, assuming the customary tone of a young man of the world among his companions. But under the light and rapid dialogue we may perceive a fencing of wits; questions ventured to try the Prince; swift feints and thrusts and parries. What theory of the cause of Hamlet's discontent has evidently been in the minds of both his schoolfellows? How have the circumstances suggested it? (See Act V., sc. ii., l. 65.)

When Hamlet conjures Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to tell

the truth, lines 283-288, he is doubtless uttering conventional expressions, — such as they themselves would have glibly used, — with a certain lightness of tone which implies that he knows he is dealing with counters rather than the real coin. These companions are so far removed from the possibility of reading his heart that he does not even take the trouble to disguise himself in the poor mask of feigned madness; he tells them his true condition, with an absolute confidence that they will not understand him. (Lines 295-311.) He even daringly admits that he is “but mad north-north-west.” It is difficult to characterize the astonishing openness and ease with which Hamlet treats these two, well known to him of old; his outward courtesy, combined with a cool, frank, unwavering distrust. The conventionality and cynicism which characterize his relations with them are particularly emphasized when he takes care to give them the formal “appurtenance of welcome,” gravely explaining that otherwise his greeting to the players might seem disproportionately warm.

The introduction of this topic, the players, into the conversation, gives Shakespeare an opportunity for a little satire dealing with contemporary affairs. (See note on l. 332.) But this bit of allusive dialogue is knit to the plot by its termination, the characteristic sudden sarcasm of Hamlet, in lines 363-368. Fechter used to accent this sarcasm by an ingenious device. As he spoke the words “mine uncle is king in Denmark,” he touched as it were carelessly with his finger the miniature of Claudius, hanging at the neck of one of these devoted courtiers.

The reëntrance of Polonius seems to awaken in Hamlet an impish spirit of mockery; but toward the players his bearing is perfect. His quick changes make us exclaim with the clown in *Twelfth Night*, “Thy mind is a very opal.” But it is almost overwhelming to be left with him when the players and the courtiers have withdrawn, and to see the strong, agonized working of the mind that has so lately fascinated us by its lightning play. It is the first time we have thus looked into Hamlet’s inmost soul since the night of the Ghost’s revelation.

— We find in the long soliloquy, lines 550-609, the tendency “to foster and increase his own excitements” previously noted. Yet this luxury of violent phrase brings him no nearer action, as, with self-scorn, he perceives; whereupon he ceases to “unpack his heart with words,” and straightway loses himself

again, this time not in passion, but in contrivance.—Is Hamlet really skeptical as to the genuineness of the Ghost, or is the hypothesis, here suggested, only a method of gaining time? (Curiously enough, the suggested theory,—abandoned, in the light of disproving facts, by Hamlet himself; see Act III., sc. ii., l. 275,—has recently found a supporter in Mr. James F. Randall.) At what point in the scene do we find the first hint of Hamlet's purpose in regard to the play? How, then, should this closing passage be delivered by the actor?

*Act III., sc. i.* How touching is the little, rootless hope that Ophelia confesses, with her young shyness, in l. 42!—It is startling to get our first glimpse of the guilty soul of Claudius in l. 50. Until now we have had only his "painted words." It can hardly be accidental that we have here the exclamation, "O heavy burthen!" and, but a few lines after, Hamlet's "weary load." It is an insistence on the weight which life imposes alike on the unjust and the just,—the burden, in the one case, of guilt, in the other of

"the mystery,  
... The heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world."

(See *The Character of Hamlet.*)

The great soliloquy, lines 56–88, has taken its tremendous hold upon men's minds, not only because of its poetry and its dramatic truth, but rather because of its universality. This is the human sigh; and through no body of literature has it been breathed more powerfully than through the Elizabethan drama. See Webster's

"Of what is 't fools make such vain keeping?  
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,  
Their life a common mist of error,  
Their death a hideous storm of terror;"

and Marston's "World! 't is the only region of death, the greatest shop of the devil, cruelest prison of men, out of the which none pass without paying their dearest breath for a fee! *There's nothing perfect in it but extreme, extreme calamity.*" (*The Malcontent.*)

Shakespeare unlocks his heart to show a mood like Hamlet's in Sonnet LXVI. Of course the Elizabethan poetry has its expressions, equally notable, of the joy and glory of life,—its manly passages like Chapman's

“There is no danger to a man that knows  
What life and death is.”

And it is somewhat comforting, as far as Shakespeare is concerned, to link this soliloquy by a single word to a supreme expression of his later mood, the dirge in *Cymbeline*:—

“Quiet consummation have ;  
And renowned be thy grave !”

Yet the note just struck is characteristic of the Elizabethans ; as, indeed, it is characteristic of our own time.

In what aspect has death hitherto appeared to Hamlet ? Return to the passages that indicate his feeling on the subject. Does it not seem probable that in this soliloquy he is brooding over the idea of suicide ? (The contrary has been maintained by Tieck and others.) Does it seem probable that he is actually debating the question of immediate suicide ? (Fechter used to enter with a drawn sword in his hand.)

The sudden vision of the fairness of Ophelia strikes acutely upon Hamlet, as he lifts his eyes from these deep musings ; and it is with an unconsidered tenderness, accompanied with sad reverence, that he addresses her. The proposed “re-delivery” of his gifts strikes coldly upon him, bringing to his mind the offense of Polonius, who has manifestly misjudged him, and arousing his resentment against Ophelia herself, who has apparently accepted her father’s view. “I never gave you aught” seems to be a quick shielding of himself by the assumption of mental irresponsibility ; unless indeed we are to take it in a much more subtle sense, as expressing Hamlet’s consciousness that no real relation has ever existed between the two. It may be doubted whether Hamlet has any such consciousness ; but this possible meaning of his abrupt denial has been suggested. Ophelia’s little reproach as she returns the gifts is evidently the immediate expression of her hurt feeling, caused by this rough denial. She cannot think of him, at the moment, as mad ; his first utterances were in his own manner ; and she is far from realizing that her pain is to his only “as water unto wine.” By the time she holds out the gifts to him, Hamlet has well adjusted his mask of madness ; but behind it his words, as always, are significant. First come the startling questions, leading to the proposition that if she be chaste and fair, she should admit no discourse (with him — precisely her father’s notion). She

answers him abstractly, as if she were engaging in a Euphuistic wit-combat (l. 108), remembering now his madness, and only seeking to lead him on in speech. His next utterance comes from the deepest bitterness of his heart: there is no honesty in woman that can withstand temptation, for "now the time gives it proof." Relate this speech to passages in Act I., sc. ii., and Act III., sc. iv. Then comes the mournful "I did love you *once*." "The very word is like a knell." It is all over. Love is dead, with all trust in womanhood, — both slain by his mother's trespass. Savagely he declares that he does not trust even himself; how should his mother's son be virtuous? He is full of faults; he is, he professes, everything that he really is *not*, — for his habit of irony here guides his speech. "We are arrant knaves all: go thy ways to a nunnery. [And, by the way, since I am expressing your father's opinions of human nature in general and of myself in particular,] where's your father?"

What Dowden calls "Ophelia's docile little lie" follows. In weighing her fault here — which is only the bringing of the larger, inclusive fraud to an acute point — it is necessary to remember that to Ophelia the whole deception is a pious undertaking, which may open the means of bringing Hamlet "to his wonted way again." We must agree that at this point Hamlet's passion suddenly increases; but it is an open question whether or not he perceives Polonius and the King. The usage of actors here varies. Does it not seem probable that he at least suspects treachery? Nowhere is his trick of lashing himself into extremes more manifest than at the close of this complex scene. As Mr. Russell writes, in his interesting account of Irving's Hamlet, "What was till now histrionic, passes, as the histrionic phase of high-strung natures easily does, into real frenzy. His words come faster and wilder. His eyes flash with a more sinister lightning as he gives Ophelia the plague of inevitable calumny for her dowry. Again, farewell; and now he rushes forth, but only to return laden, as it were, with a new armful of hastily-gathered missiles of contumely. He is getting now to the very leavings of his mind; he has nothing to hurl at his love but the commonplaces of men against women. A flash of frenzy, and he has quitted the scene."

Notice the keenness and decision of the guilty King, and the discomfiture of Polonius, still clinging weakly to his point. — What is the most pathetic line uttered by Ophelia in this scene?



*Sc. ii.* The transition from the tempest and whirlwind of Hamlet's passion to this scene, in which he appears as the cool, discriminating critic and the manly friend, is one of the most surprising in the play. Comment cannot pass by the beauty of the relation between Hamlet and Horatio; its perfect confidence, its high-bred moderation. — Connect a passage of the dialogue here with one occurring at the end of Act II.

Hamlet's "idle" behavior on the entrance of the court takes his favorite form of falling in with the suspicions of each person whom he addresses. His first speech to Claudius might easily be interpreted as the covert complaint of discontented ambition. He takes pains, in the sight of Polonius, to approach Ophelia with a coarse gallantry; and in his speeches to her tramples in the mire, as it were, the memory of their former love. — It is interesting to compare the rendering of the play-scene by different actors. The superb presentation of Booth is thus described: "Hamlet lies at Ophelia's feet, watching the guilty King with ever fiercer regard. As the action proceeds he creeps toward him, and as the mimic murder is accomplished he springs up with a cry like an avenging spirit. It seems to drive the frightened court before it. In an instant he is alone with Horatio, and, staggering forward, falls on his neck with the long, loud, mirthless laugh of a madman. When he lifts his face, it is one over which ten years have passed, yet with a fierce gladness on it, as of a man to whom a blocked way is open."

"Irving's watching of the King is not conspicuous. He does not crawl prematurely toward him or seize his robe. Even up to the crisis, though his excitement rises, his spirits bear him almost sportively through. But when once the King and Queen start from their chairs, Hamlet springs from the ground, darts with a shrill scream to the seats from which they have vanished, . . . flings himself into the chair which the King has vacated, his body swaying the while from side to side in irrepressible excitement, and recites there the stanza, 'Why, let the stricken deer go weep.' " (See note on l. 273.)

What lines in previous scenes should we connect with l. 290? In regard to l. 324 Coleridge says: "I never heard an actor give this word ['so'] the proper emphasis. Shakespeare's meaning is, 'loved you? Hum! so I do still. There has been no change in my opinions.'" The relation between them from first to last has been purely conventional and accidental; and it is only in the



terms of current and meaningless compliment that Hamlet can ever have been said to "love" Rosencrantz. Connect lines 328-332 with the cautious angling of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Act II., sc. ii. The admirable but different renderings of the passage with the recorders by Booth and Irving may be recalled. The sarcasm has, perhaps, a keener edge in Irving's presentation; but the princely grace of Booth was here, as throughout the play, inimitable.

*Sc. iii.* For courtiers who can match the obsequiousness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern we shall have to go to the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, where we find such sentiments as these:—

" The hearts of princes  
Are like the temples of the gods; pure incense  
Burns ever there; we must not put 'em out  
Because the priests that touch those sweets are wicked."

(The attitude of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is shown, in a flash, by the horrified exclamation of the latter, Act IV., sc. ii., l. 29.)

For an explanation of the unwillingness of Hamlet to kill Claudius while he is at prayer, see Mr. White's footnote on l. 88.

*Sc. iv.*, l. 23. What is the importance of this deed of Hamlet in the structure of the play?

It is hard to explain the rashness of his action, since up to this point the strongest emphasis has been laid upon his hesitation and inability to act. On this subject D. J. Snider (quoted by Dr. Furness in the Appendix to the Variorum Edition, p. 182) has some very helpful remarks. He says: "Impulse has sway over Hamlet at times, as over every human being. This is the first and lowest form of action, unconscious, unreflecting, and belongs to the emotional nature of man, in which Hamlet is not wanting. Under its influence people act upon the spur of the moment, without thinking of consequences. Hence Hamlet's drawback—reflection—is not now present, and there is nothing to restrain him from action. *But the moment there is delay sufficient to let his thoughts get a start, then farewell, deed; impulse possesses him no longer.*"

L. 30. Is the Queen wholly guiltless as regards the murder of Hamlet's father? The received editions leave the question open to debate, though there are strong arguments in favor of her innocence. But the first quarto is explicit:—

“*Queen.* Alas, it is the weakness of thy brain  
Which makes thy tongue to blazon thy heart’s grief :  
But as I have a soul, I swear by heaven  
I never knew of this most horrid murder.”

(Incidentally, the feebleness of these lines may give the student a taste of the inferior quality of the quarto of 1603.)

L. 175 is often torn from its context and quoted in a sense different from its original meaning. It should not be taken as “I must be apparently cruel in order to be really kind.” To grasp its true meaning, read it in relation with the changes of Hamlet’s mood and manner during the scene ; it then becomes, “I must, alas, be cruel, only to relent and go to the other extreme, — thus undoing all that I have accomplished by my sternness.”

*Act IV.* No new traits of character are developed in scenes i., ii., and iii. Sc. iv. has relation chiefly to the topic considered under the heading *The Hesitation of Hamlet*. It will be seen that Hamlet’s account of his mysterious will-paralysis, though less passionate than in Act II., sc. ii., is much clearer. It is as if the appearance of Fortinbras had, startling him by a sharp contrast, brought him to the full realization of his own state.

From the beginning of sc. v. to the end of Act IV., Hamlet is no longer the centre of interest. Into the place of this great, singular, and fascinating figure which has so long occupied our attention, now steals another, ghost-like and frail : the gentle creature who was too slight-natured to help the Prince in his need has been enough of a woman to suffer ; and as she stands before us in her helpless, piteous madness, turning “hell itself to favor and to prettiness,” we understand, while we condemn, the passion that in her brother’s breast beats down all the barriers of right and wrong. “O rose of May, kind sister, sweet Ophelia !” We seem to see, in Laertes’ cry, the tender petals of the torn wild-rose whirled along a cruel wind of destiny. — Where, in Act IV., sc. v., and Act V., sc. i., does Shakespeare again associate Ophelia with *the violet* ?

Are we to attribute the madness of Ophelia, as Laertes does, to her father’s death alone ? or to the total shock of the girl’s recognition of evil, beginning with the attempted sapping of her trust in her lover, continuing with the horror of his apparent madness, his savage and at last insulting speech, and culminating

in the sudden snatching from her of her one stay and guide in these strange, dark places, — the father she has loved and obeyed? (We see at last the tenderness of her affection for Polonius, till now kept from expression by his formal assumption of dignity; and if the old man was not worth this tenderness, so much the more pathetic do the signs of it become.)

It seems almost as if the position of Ophelia were intended to balance that of Hamlet; as if, while Shakespeare was showing us the tremendous and disorganizing effect of the sudden realization of powerful evil and inexplicable sorrow upon a nature strong and complex, he chose at the same time to move us by the sight of its crushing effect upon a nature simple and weak. And the connection seems indicated by the presence of the same elements in the affliction of each, — sudden distrust of one beloved, sudden loss of another.

*Sc. vii.* The principal point to be observed here is the skill with which Claudius manipulates Laertes. The youth is as clay in the hands of the crafty King. His own suggestion of the use of poison (lines 138-146) is indeed revolting, and opens to our imagination a vista of evil influences, such as in Shakespeare's own day may have surrounded a wild youth, pursuing his will, unguided, in a foreign city. The career of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, is one instance among many that remind us of the free use of poison in the Elizabethan time. Certainly, Laertes is guilty of a most villanous action; yet it is not likely that Shakespeare wishes us wholly to withdraw our sympathy from the fallen youth, whom he permits partly to retrieve himself by an expressed misgiving and a final confession in Act V., *sc. ii.*, and whose accumulating wrongs and griefs are kept constantly before us. (Notice the forgiveness exchanged, Act V., *sc. ii.*, lines 334-337.)

In the reflections of the King (*sc. vii.*, lines 110-117) we have an opportunity to mark the difference between the line of opinion proper to Claudius, and the real belief and feeling of him who created Claudius. Compare Sonnet CXVI. — It is a curiously subtle dramatic irony that the murderer should here urge revenge for the death of a father, using just such incitements (lines 117-121) as Hamlet needs to spur him on.

*Act V., sc. i.* Why does Shakespeare, at this important stage of the action, introduce the scene of grim humor between the

two Clowns? Is not a background of the commonest human nature necessary to bring the more important figures — now struggling involved in a tragic complication — into strong relief? Here, again, we could not imagine a constructive irony more powerful than that which places Hamlet by the side of Ophelia's open grave, bandying jests and questions, and discussing his own madness, with the clownish Gravedigger, callous of hand and soul. — Mark the characteristic working of the Prince's mind, — how it passes from considering particulars into a generalization.

How much weight are we to give to the declaration of Hamlet (lines 274–276)? Compare Act III., sc. i., l. 115. We must certainly make some deduction here for his hysteric mood. Is there any intimation in sc. ii. that the death of Ophelia has moved him deeply?

Sc. ii. Have we any reason to suppose that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern knew the nature of the commission entrusted to them? If they were ignorant of it, is their punishment wholly deserved? The death penalty for sycophancy is extreme. Horatio expresses no opinion; what do you conceive to lie behind his slow, musing, "So Rosencrantz and Guildenstern go to't —"? His tone may be guessed by the effect upon Hamlet, who immediately takes a defensive attitude. Did Hamlet's action spring from malignity, or from a total absence of feeling in regard to them, accompanied by a complete intellectual absorption in the game he was playing? Connect it with certain lines at the close of Act III.

Snider remarks: "Hamlet possesses what may be called *negative action*, — the power of frustrating the designs of his enemies. . . . It is what we term *rational action* from which Hamlet is excluded. Here the individual seizes a true and justifiable end and carries it into execution." The same writer comments on that "most improbable event," the capture of Hamlet, alone, by the pirates: "Accident, contrary to the general rule of the poet, seems to determine the course of things in the most startling manner." But the real importance of this accident is its effect upon the mind of Hamlet. "He has come to prefer unconscious impulse to deliberation; he has renounced intelligence as the guide of conduct. [Lines 6–11.] . . . The great cause of his conversion was this startling event, in which he saw that . . . some external power was mistress over the best-matured plans

of men. Here is an element which had never been included in his calculations, upon which heretofore he had placed so great reliance ; suddenly they are swept down by this unknown force. . . . Hamlet thus becomes a convert from Intelligence to Fate, from self-determination to external determination. . . . Thus it will be seen that the introduction of this accident is based upon the weightiest grounds, and is in the completest harmony with the development of the drama. Accident appears here . . . to determine character."

Hamlet's new fatalism explains his acceptance of a suspicious proposal, and his resistance to his own misgivings. (Lines 224-229.)

Booth's skillful management of the difficult catastrophe is thus described by Dr. Furness : " Hamlet secures Laertes' foil by a powerful parry of his thrust in *carte*, by which Hamlet disarms him ; catching his foil as it leaves his grasp with the left hand, Hamlet uses it as a dagger, being too close to him for a free use of his own weapon. Should a stickler for 'the code' object to this 'pass of practice,' it may be urged that the men are 'incensed,' and excitement must excuse it ; and Laertes is estopped from demanding fair play, since his own has been foul from the start."

In the rapid dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio, Matthew Arnold fixed upon one line as so absolute in its perfection of poetry that it may be used as a touchstone. Can you find the line ?

Has Hamlet really liberated himself in this last scene, triumphing over his disease of the will ; or are his actions here in the same category as the killing of Polonius ?

By striking out the figure of Fortinbras from the last scene, the acting version of the play loses greatly in significance. The Prince of Norway is a presence felt stirring in the background all through the drama. He sets for us the standard of that which is effective in life. In this, the tragedy of inaction, Fortinbras is Action ; his very name declares it. At the end, the young martial figure steps into the foreground ; the strong arm shall bear the sceptre. The note of heroism and hope is needed, lest we be left enervated at the last. For Denmark a new day has dawned ; and, as it has been finely said, "Fortinbras is the morning."





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